



UNIVERSITY  
OF TASMANIA

**Towards a Unified Framework of Power: A Conceptual,  
Practical and Comparative Analysis of Michel  
Foucault's and Hannah Arendt's Accounts of Power.**

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my family

To my husband Robin, my daughters Emma-Rose, Melanie, Sophie  
and Niamh, my step-daughter Elarna and her son Lochie, and my little  
granddaughter Noor.

Thanks for everything.

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## INTRODUCTION

I remember when I was a child, there was a small hand painted wooden sign hanging in my grandfather's shed. It depicted an elderly man standing on a world globe and underneath was written the phrase "Stop the world, I want to get off". An understandable sentiment perhaps, but one which holds significant consequences for the world and the individual who wishes to escape it. As a child I struggled to understand what it was that the elderly man wished to escape, but as an adult it became clear to me that to find one's place in the world required navigating a challenging path between power and freedom, one that was so difficult that occasionally it would have been beneficial to stop the world momentarily and to disembark temporarily. This idea raises an important question concerning how power in all its complexity mediates the relationship between the individual and their world. The answer to this question hinges on gaining a deeper understanding of how power is implicated in the activities through which human beings shape their world and how the world shapes human life and its possibilities.

My thesis is about power and how it mediates lived experience. My aim is to provide a detailed account of the complexity of our individual experiences of power, to explore the implications of power within our everyday social relationships and to emphasize the empowering possibilities offered by the way that we live in the world with

others. This will be achieved through conceptual, practical and comparative analyses of the accounts of power offered by Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt. Foucault and Arendt are two highly original theorists whose key insights on the relationship between human beings and their world capture the intricacies of power and its role in human life.

While Foucault's and Arendt's accounts of power have been the focus of considerable scholarly analysis and debate in their own right, recently there has been a great deal of interest in the possibilities offered by a dual analysis of their work. Arendt's and Foucault's shared philosophical influences, their concern with modern politics and their rejection of traditional understandings of power have led an increasing number of scholars to explore the benefits of a twofold examination of Arendt's and Foucault's accounts of power (Villa, 1992; Allen, 1999 & 2001; Gordon, 2002; Dolan, 2005). The many interesting insights that have emerged from these varied analyses have not only articulated the many points of agreement and contention between Foucault's and Arendt's perspectives of power, but they have also further illuminated the complexity of the relationship between power and lived experience.

My thesis aims to enable a more detailed understanding of the many ways that power shapes human existence; the way that power promotes human autonomy, the suffering of those who are subject to power and the moral implications of the way in which we exercise power over ourselves and others. From the perspective of my own concerns about power, a set of particular assumptions about the character of human existence in the world will guide my analysis. Providing the framework for my discussion

are the notions of inter-subjectivity and the world-mediated character of human lived experience. These concepts are associated with the existentialist tradition and significantly inform the approach of (such philosophers as) Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. With its origins in the work of Hegel and Fichte, the notion that the existence of an individual self is predicated upon the existence of other selves was key to the existentialist writing of both Heidegger and Sartre (Cooper, in Crowell, 2012: 44).

Strongly influenced by the ideas of existential philosophy, Foucault and Arendt ground their accounts of power upon a set of shared suppositions and concerns about the character of human life (Villa, 1992; Allen, 1999 & 2001; Gordon, 2002). Building on the importance of this commonality I will emphasize the ways in which this shared world view provides a foundation for two distinctive accounts of power that emphasize different aspects of the relationship between human beings and the world. The accounts of power offered by Foucault and Arendt embody a set of key notions that at times are in conflict and at other times mutually imply each other. In examining these points of contention and agreement I will further the project of articulating Foucault's and Arendt's accounts of power as part of a wider framework.<sup>1</sup> In this way I will offer an analysis that can reveal the complexity of the ways that power mediates lived experience in more detail. Drawing

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<sup>1</sup> Allen (2001) dual analysis of Foucauldian and Arendtian power argues for a "broader view of power" that goes beyond the conclusions and insights of their stand-alone accounts.

on the notion that an in-depth understanding of how power shapes our everyday lives requires a conceptual framework that privileges the inter-subjective nature of human lived experience, I must depart from more traditional accounts of power which associate power with control, force or violence.<sup>2</sup>

The Heideggerian concept of human existence as being-in-the-world will be significant for my analysis. In very general terms, Heidegger's account of human being as primarily a being-in-the-world, represents a particular unity between human beings and the world they inhabit (Mulhall, 2005: 36-40). Heidegger's being-in-the-world is characterized by the existence of other beings; a "being with" that reflects a common existence in the world (Sartre, 2003: 270-271). Heidegger's phenomenological approach emphasizes the fact that human beings are shaped by practices specific to their particular history and culture and that the meaning of these background practices relate to ways of living in and dealing with the world (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: p.xxi).

In adopting the perspective that human existence is inter-subjective and world mediated, it follows that an understanding of power that emphasizes the centrality of

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<sup>2</sup> I am referring here to the definitions of power offered by such theorists as Robert Dahl (Dahl, 1957: cited in Ailon, 2006: 771), Bachrach and Baratz (1970), and Steven Lukes (2005).



human relationships is required to fully explore the relationship between human beings and their world. Both Foucault and Arendt reject traditional models of power that portray power as something exerted over subjects by a sovereign ruler; arguing instead for a relational and productive notion of power that exists in a domain of human inter-subjectivity (Allen, 2001:142).

While writers such as Allen, Gordon, Dolan and Villa have already accomplished much of the “heavy lifting” in the context of establishing the benefits of a dual analysis of Foucault’s and Arendt’s work, there is still room for further development in this area. While the aim of my thesis is to gain a more detailed understanding of the ways in which power mediates lived experience, there is another contribution that I hope to make. Through my own analysis, I also hope to further the project of developing a unified framework of power based on Arendt’s and Foucault’s key insights. This will be accomplished through a detailed conceptual and comparative analysis of Arendt’s and Foucault’s perspectives of power and through an applied analysis of their key insights in a practical context.

Of course, it is important to first establish what is meant by the term power in order to examine and describe the role it plays in human life. While Michel Foucault provides many definitions and explanations of power throughout his substantial body of work, I consider the following definition to be key to understanding Foucault’s position: power is “... a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions.” (Foucault, 2002: 341).

Foucault's complex theorization of power is not fully encapsulated by this quotation, yet the emphasis on action and agency captures an essential aspect of Foucauldian power. Arendtian power is also grounded upon action and agency, as the following statement emphasizes: "Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert" (Arendt, 1970: 44). For Arendt, power is associated with the human capacity to act collectively toward a common end.

Beginning my exploration of power from a Foucauldian perspective, I will articulate the ways in which our everyday lives are shaped by inter-subjective relations, social practices and institutional arrangements. Foucault recognizes the significant implications of organized and powerful forms of social control on human possibility, yet he also places great emphasis on individual responsibility and resistance to provide a detailed explanation of the ways in which power mediates human lived experience. Foucault's later ethical work focuses on the creative possibilities of self-care at the expense of the possibilities associated with human solidarity and collective action (Allen, 2001: 143). In attempting to present a more comprehensive account of power, I turn to the writing of Hannah Arendt as a much needed response that is continuous with Foucault's approach in important ways (Allen, 2001: 131-132). Arendt's emphasis on the possibilities of human togetherness and collective action articulates a dimension of power not fully addressed by Foucault's analysis.

The ambiguities of being human, the ways in which we shape our world just as we are shaped by the world in which we live, support the notion that only a multi-

dimensional perspective of power can hope to articulate the complexity of the inter-subjective spaces we inhabit. In appealing to two distinct approaches towards power that nevertheless emerge from within a common framework, a more detailed account of the many ways that power mediates our everyday lives can be articulated.

As many writers who have contributed to the project of a dual analysis have acknowledged, while a shared world view is important, the tensions that arise between their accounts of power are equally significant. Amy Allen for example, recognizes the impossibility of providing a comprehensive definition of power that could address its full complexity and apply un-problematically to all situations (Allen, 1999: 121). However, there is much to be gained from efforts to articulate a broader framework of power that draws upon the insights of Foucault and Arendt (Allen, 2001: 143-145). From my own perspective, I will articulate some specific ways in which the work of Foucault and Arendt mutually imply each other and together form part of a larger picture of power.

The wider literature provides much to draw upon in this context. Allen (1999: 121) offers a dynamic feminist framework of power drawn from the work of Foucault, Arendt and Judith Butler that explores the key insights offered by each theorist, while aiming to avoid the limitations and difficulties inherent to each individual approach. The method adopted by Neve Gordon is somewhat different in that Arendt's key insights into aspects of human experience and her account of power is discussed as a possible "corrective" to address some issues arising from Foucauldian power and resistance (Gordon, 2002: 125).

In many ways, the mode of analysis I will adopt is a hybrid of these two approaches. I will examine the key insights offered by Foucault's account of power. I will then make the most of these insights through a Foucauldian analysis of power in an applied context. After identifying some limitations of Foucault's account of power, I will introduce Arendt's key concepts on power as a critical response to the gaps left by a purely Foucauldian perspective. This will involve an in-depth examination of Arendtian power and a discussion of some practical implications of Arendt's key insights. The final part of my thesis will draw out the ways that Arendt's and Foucault's accounts of power mutually imply each other in order to articulate Arendt's and Foucault's accounts of power as two dimensions of a wider and more unified theoretical model.

My discussion of power will be informed by some other key concepts that have particular meanings for Foucault and Arendt. Subjectivity, the achievement of self-understanding, freedom and politics have specific and different meanings for Foucault and Arendt. While these important concepts will be discussed in detail throughout my thesis, it is important at this point to single out the notion of freedom for special mention, as Arendt and Foucault both understand freedom as more than liberation from control and constraint. For both theorists, though in different ways, freedom is associated with human possibility and intricately connected with power. In my discussion I will further examine the importance of this understanding of freedom and explain how it animates Foucault's and Arendt's accounts of power in different ways.

My thesis is presented in Four sections, with Section One encompassing four chapters devoted to a detailed examination of Foucauldian power. My thesis will begin with a critical analysis of the significant insights offered by Foucault's account of power, articulated within a framework that acknowledges the complex relationship between power, subjectivity and freedom. Chapter One explores the historical context of Foucault's approach to power, with particular attention paid to the Heideggerian influences within his account. In Chapter Two I will explore Foucault's theorization of the power/knowledge relationship, his controversial account of modern disciplinary power and his theorization of resistance. Chapter Three will focus on the relationship between power and subjectivity, where I will emphasize that in articulating the constitutive effects of power on human subjectivity, Foucault illuminates the dangers of a largely anonymous power for human subjectivity and freedom. In Chapter Four I will examine the relationship between power and "the political" in Foucault's work in order to illuminate the ways in which the relationship between power and freedom creates political spaces of moral possibility.

In Section Two, I will demonstrate the benefits of a Foucauldian approach, through a practical analysis of power in an applied context. I will critically analyze Foucault's insights in the context of key events and transformations of the multicultural Australian community of Cabramatta in New South Wales during the 1990s. The events that occurred in Cabramatta during the 1990's and beyond were portrayed in a recent Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) documentary *Once Upon a Time in Cabramatta*

(Hickey, 2012). This documentary provided a narrative of the struggles faced by the Vietnamese community in Cabramatta, many of whom who had come to Australia as refugees after the end of the Vietnam War. Whilst viewing this documentary I found myself reflecting on the complexity of the mutual interaction between “self” and “world”. Of particular significance was the way in which the socio-political responses to events in Cabramatta appeared to shape the lived experience of members of the community in a multitude of different ways. This prompted me to more deeply consider the importance of providing not only theoretical examinations of Arendtian and Foucauldian power, but also engaging in applied analyses that reveal the practical benefits and limitations in a real-life context. *Once Upon a Time in Cabramatta* provided the initial inspiration for my attempt to demonstrate the “real life” significance of the theoretical frameworks of power offered by Arendt and Foucault.

For those who are not familiar with the problems and issues experienced in Cabramatta at this particular time in history, I will begin Section Two of my thesis with a detailed discussion of the events and transformations that took place. In brief, it is important to emphasize that there were significant issues experienced by the community that were connected to drug-related crime. These issues and the social and political responses that aimed to address them significantly impacted the lives of individuals living in Cabramatta. Through the lens of Foucauldian power, I will articulate the ways in which relations of power interacted with agency and freedom to shape the lived experience of members of the community. Chapter Five sets out the background of

Cabramatta, while Chapter Six will embody a Foucauldian analysis of power relations in Cabramatta. I will end Section Two with a discussion of some problematic aspects of Foucault's account of power which will form the subject matter of Chapter Seven. In particular, I will question whether the relationship between freedom and power theorized by Foucault provides an implicit normative framework that is sufficient to ground a set of moral distinctions between different forms of power.

In Section Three, I will introduce Hannah Arendt as the theorist whose account of power can offer an alternative perspective on the relationship between power and lived experience and can critically engage with some of the limitations of Foucault's theory. Chapter Eight will provide a discussion of some central concepts that underpin Arendtian power, while Chapter Nine will focus on Arendt's characterizations of power. Arendt's analysis of power presented in Chapter Eight is grounded upon a particular understanding of two important over-arching concepts. The first is the notion of "the world" as the public space of commonality where individuals fully appear to each other (Arendt, 1998: 51-52). Of equal importance is Arendt's account of an authentic political realm of human action and her concerns about the encroachment of a "social realm" of human activity. These concepts will be emphasized as crucial to Arendtian power and underpinning of a significant divergence between Arendt's and Foucault's distinctive approaches. My conceptual analysis of Arendtian power will reflect the complexity of her account and emphasize the importance of her contribution to a combined framework of power. The

aim of Section Three is to illuminate the complexity and significance of an Arendtian framework of power in a high level of detail.

I will complete Section Three with an applied Arendtian analysis of Cabramatta which will be the subject of my arguments in Chapter Ten. While Arendt's account of power offers many avenues of interesting analysis, the scope of my discussion will be limited to one important aspect of Arendt's account of power: Arendt's theorization of the power of collective politics. This aspect of her work will be articulated in the context of addressing the limitations of my Foucauldian analysis of Cabramatta and as making an important contribution to a more detailed picture of how power mediates lived experience.

Section Four consists of Chapter Eleven, where I will set out a more unified framework of power based upon Foucault's and Arendt's accounts. This framework will be supported through an examination of the ways in which Arendt's and Foucault's accounts of power mutually imply each other. In this final section of my thesis, I will build upon Allen's arguments concerning the need for a wider framework of power by offering my own interpretation of what this framework might look like.

Through my conceptual, practical and comparative analyses of power, I will offer a detailed picture of the complexity of the relationship between power and lived experience. The philosophical aim of my thesis is to provide a more detailed account of the common aspects of the human experience of power in its intricacy and to open up a philosophical space where the relationship between individuals and their world can be



understood in more detail. As an individual my aim is modest: to acquire a deeper understanding of how power has shaped my own life, to fully recognize the implications of the relationship between power and freedom and to fully actualize my possibilities within the world. However, I also hope that these reflections on power may resonate with the experience of others, particularly those who feel marginalized or “invisible”. In this way, the richness of individual stories of power and lived experience can be more fully revealed.

## **SECTION ONE: MICHEL FOUCAULT’S ANALYTIC OF POWER**

### **Chapter One: Foucault’s Approach to Power: A Historical Context.**

Many Foucauldian scholars have theorized the significant philosophical influences on Foucault’s approach to power, with particular attention paid to the Nietzschean and Heideggerian aspects to his thought (Connelly, 1985; Thiele, 1990; Dreyfus, 1996; Ransom, 1997; Gordon, 1999; Allen, 2001; Grumley, 2006). In situating Foucault’s approach to power in a historical context it is important to recognize the influence of the existentialist perspective embodied in the writing of not only such scholars as Heidegger, but also in the work of philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean–Paul Sartre. The existential perspective embodies the notion that “...the self is not something simply given-as substance or even as “subject”- but is something made or constituted through my choices and commitments.” (Crowell, 2012: 8).

#### **THE IMPORTANCE OF HEIDEGGER**

In *Being and Time* Heidegger presents the subject as formed by a historical and cultural background; a background within which human beings learn to interpret their

being (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: xxi). Heidegger articulates human being as Dasein, which he defines as "...a being that does not just simply occur among other beings." (Heidegger, 1996, 4: 10). Dasein cares about its existence and this care or concern is "...constitutive of the being of Da-sein to have, in its very being, a relation of being to this being." (Heidegger, 1996, 4: 10). Dasein gains self-understanding in the context of its being-in-the-world, thus the notion of self can be understood as "...full disclosedness of being-in-the-world *throughout all* its essential constitutive factors (Heidegger, 1996, 31: 137). For Heidegger the notion of world represents the practical human environment, a totality of socially and culturally created projects that provides the backdrop against which objects can appear as the kind of objects that they are (Mulhall, 2005: 48-51).

According to Hubert Dreyfus (1996), there is an important difference between Heidegger's understanding of the way in which background practices operate and Foucault's. For Heidegger, being is characterised by openness and receptivity towards the requirements of the historical and cultural environment, thus background practices work by "...gathering, and so bringing things into their own" (Dreyfus, 1996: 13). For Foucault, background practices illuminate a continually changing struggle; a struggle that requires not merely human receptivity but active individual practices of resistance (Dreyfus, 1996: 13). Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of human worldly experience assumes that self-awareness arises through a concern and care for our own existence (Atkins, 2005: 114). Dasein denotes a way of being-in-the-world that through *care*, allows the meaningfulness of the world to be disclosed (Heidegger, 1996, 27: 251-

254). The notion of *care* relates to the way in which Dasein's being-in-the-world matters for it and how it responds to the character of the world in which it is involved (Heidegger, 1996, 27: 254).

Dreyfus provides a helpful typology of the four senses of Heidegger's notion of *world* which are defined as : *Ontical-categorical*, or the world as a "totality of objects" of a particular kind; *Ontological-Categorical*, which refers to the character of a specific kind of entity or what a specific entity has in common with all others of that type; *Ontical-Existentiell*, or the world in which Dasein lives characterized by shared values and practices; and finally the *Ontological-Existential*, which encompasses the notion of worldliness or what is common to the general reality of our world (Dreyfus, 1991: 89-91). These different senses of world are important for understanding Heidegger's account of human being as being-in-the-world, because as human beings who are Dasein, we are never merely present in the world but are deeply involved in it, as Heidegger states:

As an existential, "being with" the world never means anything like the being-objectively-present-together of things that occur. There is no such thing as the "being next to each other" of a being called "Dasein" with another being called "world".  
(Heidegger, 1996, 55: 51)

According to Heidegger the world conditions human life in various ways, one of which he refers to as the “social” or “collective” aspect of the world or the fact that our worldly existence is an existence with others (Mulhall, 2005: 61). Being-with is an attribute of human Dasein in the ontological rather than the ontic sense (Mulhall, 2005: 65) in that even when we are alone our being is one of being-with-others in that “Being-with is an attribute of one own Da-sein” (Heidegger, 1996, 26: 113).

Therefore, the world of Dasein is an inter-subjective world within which each Dasein develops dimensions of their individuality through relationships with others (Mulhall, 2005: 66). The ontological conditions that underpin the development of our self-understandings have existential implications, and from a Heideggerian perspective, the ways in which we engage with others and the way in which we understand ourselves through our inter-subjective relationships will determine how we develop our own individuality (Mulhall, 2005: 66-67). As Heidegger argues:

Being towards others is not only an autonomous irreducible relation of being, as being-with it already exists with the being of Da-sein. Of course, it is indisputable that a lively mutual acquaintanceship on the basis of being-with often depends on how far one’s own Da-sein has actually understood itself, but this means that it depends only on how far one’s essential being

with others has made it transparent and not disguised itself  
(Heidegger, 1996, 26: 117)

The notion of being-in-the-world is also central to the phenomenological approach of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who in congruence with Heidegger understands the notion of world as a realm of meaning in which human beings are active and engaged (Matthews, 2002: 55). However, while Heidegger's concern is the revelation of *being*, Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenological approach attempts to analyse the nature of human subjectivity in its necessary relationship with the world (Matthews, 2002: 56). In alignment with Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty recognises that being-in-the-world embodies being-with-others in a permanent social world which is "always already there" and which is a universal dimension of human existence (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 362). In other words, the inter-subjectivity of the world is central to our lived experience. Because we are born into a world with others and are thus social beings, there is a common aspect to our projects and practices that provides a dimension of meaning to our historical existence (Matthews, 2002: 109).

For Merleau-Ponty our experiences of ourselves as worldly beings is an embodied experience and our bodies are what enables us to take up our position in the world (Matthews, 2002: 8). Experience presupposes that human beings inhabit the world and are a part of it, in the sense that we think, act and carry out projects within it (Matthews, 2002: 45-49). In an interview in 1978, Foucault emphasizes that the phenomenologist's

concern is to reflect upon aspects of lived experience to gain an understanding of how an individual self is “responsible” for giving meaning to these experiences in the world (Foucault, 2002: 241). He goes on to situate his own approach in the tradition of a “project of desubjectification” associated with the work of Nietzsche, Bataille and Blanchot, in the sense that he aims to articulate the possibilities of “limit experiences” which transform subjectivity and self-understandings (Foucault, 2002: 241-242).

In situating Foucault’s perspective on the relationship between human beings and their world against the backdrop of phenomenology and existentialism it is possible to gain a more in depth understanding of aspects of Foucault’s theorization of power that have their roots in a particular philosophical approach. Those acknowledged as part of the lineage of the existential philosophy tradition have embraced a set of distinctive shared concerns, in particular:

The human predicament that inspires the very enterprise of philosophy; the distinctive character of human existence that distinguishes it from all other types of existence; the intimacy of the relationship between human beings and their world; the radical character of individual human freedom; the tone that a life led in appreciation of this freedom must possess; and the structure of interpersonal relations consonant with this radical, existential freedom. (Cooper, 2012: 29)

While Foucault was critical of the humanism that underpinned these concerns (Foucault, in Rabinow & Rose, 2003: 52; Crowell, 2012: 12; Ransom, 1997:117), he nonetheless shared the desire to better understand the complex relationship between human beings and their world. However, rather than positing a subject who gives meaning to experience in the world, Foucault questions whether there are transformative worldly experiences where the subject can become disassociated from itself (Foucault, 2002: 248).<sup>3</sup>

## **SARTREAN INFLUENCES**

In the context of understanding the influences that shaped Foucault's perspective on human experience, it is helpful to review the approach of Jean-Paul Sartre: an existentialist philosopher from the phenomenological tradition, whose anti-dualist understanding of consciousness led him to posit the notion of an "impersonal consciousness" (Crowell, 2012: 203). Sartre follows Heidegger in positing the question of the meaning of being at the center of phenomenological enquiry, yet he begins with

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<sup>3</sup> Despite Foucault's critical approach to the phenomenological viewpoint, Foucault's later work revealed a return to existential ideas in his discussion of transgressive practices of self-care and freedom (Crowell, 2012: 12-13). This has been referred to as Foucault's "Heideggerian turn" (Raynor, 2004: 420).



consciousness and the idea that human being is an “alienated” being-in-the-world (Crowell, 2012: 205-207). For Sartre the self is a signification of a free being and selfhood is the adoption of projects and roles in the world (Crowell, 2012: 218) Sartre states:

What we should note at present is that freedom, which manifests itself through anguish, is characterized by a constantly renewed obligation to remake the *Self* which designates the free being.  
(Sartre, 2003: 58)

For Sartre, human reality is not reducible to consciousness because human beings are born into a social world which provides the standards, practices and roles that inform individual projects and is an “ontological feature” of the selves who live in it (Crowell, 2012: 219), thus he emphasizes that the existence of other people reveals an aspect of the self that is unable to be comprehended or taken up by the individual themselves (Sartre, 2003: 385). In other words, as there is an aspect of human existence that is always a being-for-others, there is a dimension of *being* that is outside the realm of direct human experience (Crowell, 2012: 219). The problem of *being* for Sartre is that in the consciousness of being I am engaged in yet separate from the world which provides my facticity and gives content to my being as consciousness (Smoot, 1974: 136). The alienation that results from this paradox of being underpins Sartre’s discussion of

authenticity in the context of a recovery of the self; that is a way of being that sits between the notion of transcending the world and being merely an object of the world (Smoot, 1974: 136-137). The problem can be articulated in the context of a meaningful human identity: the constitution of self-understandings that embody the limits inherent to human existence in the world, but which also embody possibilities for creating original meanings for each individual self.

While Foucault acknowledges the importance of Sartre's arguments that the self is not given to us, he rejects the Sartrean notion of authenticity and the possibility that there is an authentic self (Foucault, 1991a: 351). Foucault argues that as the self is not given to us there is no possibility of finding an authentic self, only the possibility of creating a self (Foucault, 1991a: 351). Foucault states in particular that:

...it is interesting to see that Sartre refers the work of creation to a certain relation to oneself--the author to himself--which has the form of authenticity or of inauthenticity. I would like to say exactly the contrary: we should not have to refer the creative activity of somebody to the kind of relation he has to himself, but should relate the kind of relation one has to oneself to a creative activity (Foucault, 1991a: 351)

This statement from Foucault reflects a shared Sartrean concern with the possibility of creative self-expression, while signaling an important departure from the idea that the self is the source of creativity to favor the notion that the self is created through activity in the world.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF NIETZSCHE**

Foucault acknowledges the importance of phenomenology and existentialism for shaping his early training and for providing the background against which his own choices were made (Foucault, 2002: 246-247). However, Foucault identified Nietzsche as one of the main writers who provided a way out from the phenomenological and existential tradition under which he had studied, allowing him to question the centrality of the subject and to call the subject into question in a practical way (Foucault, 2002: 246-247). An important legacy of Nietzsche's philosophical concerns for Foucault's account of power is Nietzsche's insights on truth. A sensitive reading of Foucault contra Nietzsche is provided by Barry Allen (1991: 424), who argues that while Foucault does not totally embrace a Nietzschean account of power he nonetheless shares his concern with the contingency of truth. Jon Simons (1995: 20) concurs, arguing that Foucault's notion of power/knowledge, in the context of the relationship between truth and subjectivity, is indebted to Nietzsche's account of the "will to truth". Further support for the significance of Nietzsche's influence comes from Thomas Dumm (1996: 72-73) who argues that within the seminal book *Discipline and Punish* Foucault was taking part in a

“subtle dialogue” with Nietzsche in adopting the notion of truth as perspectival. The influence of Nietzsche manifests itself in many ways and in particular, Nietzsche’s arguments concerning human knowledge are highly significant for Foucault’s account of the relationship between power and knowledge (Ransom, 1997:118).

Now that I have signaled some important philosophical influences on Foucault’s work, I will turn to an examination of the key features of Foucault’s theorization of power. The following discussion in Chapter Two will provide an in-depth analysis of Foucauldian power and a detailed discussion of how Foucault views the relationship between power and subjectivity, freedom and politics.

## **Chapter Two: A Controversial Account of Power**

Before I begin my analysis it is important to identify exactly what Foucault is referring to when he talks about power. From Foucault's perspective power is not a human "capacity", in the sense of an individual's capability to exert force of violence over objects, but a relationship between human beings of a specific and particular character, or "...an ensemble of actions which induce others and follow from one another..." (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 217). For Foucault, power refers to the diversity of force relations inherent within the many spaces of human life which form structures, associations, and organized systems, while also producing inequalities, divisions and oppositions (Foucault, 2008: 92-93).

Power responds to particular historical problems, forming a multiplicity of relations which are founded in something other than themselves, that are embedded within other processes and relationships and which allow the development of other structures, relationships and entities (Foucault, 1996: 259-260). This is crucial to Foucault's account of the workings of modern forms of power because it emphasizes the socially-situated nature of power relations. It also reveals the role of power in the creation and development of new possibilities for human relationships, for individual resistance and for self-transformation.

## THE CHARACTER OF POWER

While Foucault does not adopt an account of power as a phenomenon that exists separate from human relationships, he nevertheless rejects the view that power is merely an extension or reflection of other forces (Foucault, 2002: 337). Power has a concreteness and materiality in Foucault's account that implies an intricate co-existence with societal institutions, practices and processes, while discounting the possibility that power could ever be reducible to them (Foucault, 1996: 260). Foucault argues that the "technology of power" arises from a diverse set of particular and concrete circumstances which always embody a set of particular needs to which strategies and tactics of power respond (Foucault, 1980: 159). Strategies and tactics of power are open to being consolidated in the form of state or class power while still retaining the capacity to engender struggles and resistances (Foucault, 1980: 159).

For Foucault, resistance to power emerges from the historical and social particularity of human lived experience (Ransom, 1997: 25). Human beings do not enter the world as fully fashioned subjects but are formed as individuals through always changeable and unstable relations of power that operate within the social realm (Allen, 2001: 135). For Foucault, power constitutes subjectivity in the sense that every human being is "subjected to" relations of power in society which are simultaneously the conditions under which every human being becomes "a subject" (Allen, 2001: 135). Human beings are always situated within relations of power that provoke resistance, the

central purpose of which is to counter and contest a mode of power that nevertheless ultimately shapes self-understandings (Foucault, 2002: 331). For Foucault, the purpose of illuminating the ways in which power shapes our individuality is to open up possibilities for refusing some aspects of the selves that power has constituted and to embrace the possibilities of what we could be through the creation of new subjectivities (Foucault, 2002: 336).

## **THE PRODUCTIVITY OF POWER**

In order to appreciate the impact of the aims of Foucault's controversial theorization of power, it is necessary to explicate some key claims that constitute a significant departure from more traditional views of power that have understood power purely in terms of the model of sovereignty. Foucault argues against the reduction of power to that which refuses or prohibits (Foucault, 1980: 139), arguing that power embodies many forms, is infused throughout society in its connections with wider social relations and is always accompanied by resistance (Foucault, 1980: 142). The main concern, from Foucault's perspective, is that the relationship of sovereignty is founded upon the notion of power as negative and repressive, thereby failing to account for the positive and productive functions of modern forms of power (McHoul & Grace, 1993: 63-64). A central aspect of Foucault's account of power is his exploration of power's

productive nature and the way it shapes societal institutions, social practices and forms of knowledge (McHoul, & Grace, 1993: 64). The productivity of power can be understood in terms of the role of power relations in the constitution of subjects, where subjectivity is understood as a “form” rather than a “substance” (Foucault, 2003a: 33).

Foucault theorizes modern power as a relational, productive and dynamic process characterized by these central claims: power cannot be acquired, lost, or shared, as it is never wholly present in one place; power imbues and conditions all other human relations, including sexual relations, economic relations and family relations; power emerges from the peripheries of the social body in everyday relations, becoming more organized and less dynamic as it becomes consolidated at higher levels; relations of power are imbued with calculation and intention but are not attributable to any one individual; and finally, power always necessarily creates its own resistance (Foucault, 2008: 94-96). For Foucault, power is understood in terms of a relational activity occurring between individuals or groups who, through their actions, aim to bring about and modify the actions of others (Foucault, 2002: 337). The opportunities for power’s colonization of human life, means that no individual or group can fully control the



network of power relations, or as Foucault states:

Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action, even though, of course, it is inscribed in a field of sparse available possibilities underpinned by permanent structures. (Foucault, 2002: 340)

For Foucault, power relations cannot be reduced to the human capacity to control and modify the physical world, nor can power be understood as only a form of communicative interaction. Subsequently, Foucault's account preserves the distinction between communicative relations, objective capacities and power relations while allowing for the manner in which these distinct relations continually mediate each other (Foucault, 2002: 337-338). Everyday relations based on the human capacity to change and transform the material world and social communication networks are always intricately intertwined with relations of power (Foucault, 2002: 338). What distinguishes power relations from other societal relations, and (indeed) from relations of violence or force, is the way in which power acts on the actual or potential actions of human beings

(Foucault, 2002: 340). As Foucault argues:

...it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely, but it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions. (Foucault, 2002: 341)

To fully understand the productive nature of modern power as Foucault presents it, it is essential to come to terms with power's intervention at a primary level of human potentiality. The productive function of power is explored in detail within Foucault's analysis of the rise of techniques of the disciplines and their consolidation within modern forms of power. In his seminal work *Discipline and Punish* Foucault articulates how disciplinary power invests and empowers the body through increasing its productive forces, while at the same time subjecting the body to ensure its docility (Foucault, 1995: 138). In using the term discipline, Foucault refers to the complex web of relationships between many and diverse techniques that address the needs of particular and local institutions and social practices (Foucault, 1991b: 80). Disciplines were thus amenable to becoming formulas of domination that, rather than appropriating the body, invested the

body and its capacities in order to achieve the aims of power with the least expenditure and effort (Foucault, 1995: 137-138).

Disciplinary power subjects the body to diminish its capacity to use the power it gains, separating the body from any expression of power that would work against the ends of discipline (Foucault, 1995: 138). There is no essential human nature that is repressed or transformed by the effects of disciplinary society upon an individual, because individuals are produced within disciplinary society, becoming part of its operation and effectively participating in their own subjection (Foucault, 1995: 217).

## **THE RISE OF DISCIPLINARY POWER**

Foucault's non-dualist and Nietzschean approach to human embodiment has significant implications for his account of power<sup>4</sup>. For Nietzsche, there is no distinction between the soul and the body in the sense of a soul that exists as a particular entity part from the living being (Schacht, 1992: 130). However, Nietzsche recognizes the legitimacy of understanding a particular aspect of human embodied existence in terms of

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<sup>4</sup> See Foucault's discussion of the "soul as the prison of the body" in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1995: 29-30)

a “soul”, “ego”, or “subject” in the context of its social utility (Schacht, 1992: 140). In other words, it makes sense for us as human beings to understand our relation to the world in which we live in terms of a constant and stable “I”, represented by the notion of an ego or soul which is separate to the body. This is a “useful fiction” associated with the ways in which we use language and the way in which we associate action with agency (Schacht, 1992: 134-135).

Nietzsche rejects the idea that there is an essential human nature that stands apart from history and historical processes and represents a constant unchanging subject (Schacht, 1992: 132), as Nietzsche states:

...there is no being behind the doing, acting, becoming; the doer has simply been added to the deed by the imagination- the doing is everything. (Nietzsche, 1956, GM: XIII, 178-179)

This is particularly important for Nietzsche’s discussion of punishment and the complex relationship between responsibility and human embodiment. According to Nietzsche, the

process of constituting a conscience in human beings (and thus breeding a human animal who is able to make promises), is through cruelty inflicted upon the body:

Whenever man has thought it necessary to create a memory for himself, his effort has been attended with torture, blood, sacrifice..... The poorer the memory of mankind has been, the more terrible have been its customs. (Nietzsche, GM, 1956, III: 192)

For Nietzsche, the human body is not manifestation of a stable or universal human essence, but a site of contrasting and multiple drives and instincts and a function of “psycho-physiological processes” (Mellamphy & Mellamphy, 2005: 29). Foucault further developed this notion of the multiplicity of embodiment through his genealogical analyses of how power works to order this multiplicity through the social and cultural inscription of the body (Mellamphy & Mellamphy, 2005: 28-32). Foucault’s analysis of modern forms of power in *Discipline and Punish* can be understood as part of a wider effort to explicate the historical functioning of western society through its possibilities for exercising a power that deeply fashions “human material”, strengthening the state and its hold over individuals (Ransom, 1997: 28-29).

*Discipline and Punish* describes how the 18<sup>th</sup> century embraced new techniques of power that imposed “meticulous control” over the human body in order to obtain a hold upon it at a deeper level (Foucault, 1995: 136-137). While the human body had always been the object of power, its intelligibility and usefulness supported particular methods of control that aimed to ensure the docility and utility of the body’s forces (Foucault, 1995: 136-137). The combination of disciplinary techniques and power allowed a deeply embedded and continuous subjection of individual bodies to constitute individual subjects who were simultaneously more productive and more docile (Foucault, 1995: 137).

According to Foucault, the disciplines enabled the intensification of the body’s capacity for power, while directing bodily forces towards disciplinary ends (Foucault, 1995: 138) In other words, the disciplines developed and exaggerated the potential for the power in individual bodies, which it then redirected inward towards *human being* rather than outwards towards *worldly being*. The power that every human being can exercise in the world to achieve their own ends and complete their own projects, can be harnessed at the level of human capacity; as Foucault states it “...an infestimal power over the active body”. (Foucault, 1995: 137). Foucault provides examples of domains that employed disciplinary methods, including educational settings, military establishments and hospitals and the most significant point he makes is that while these disciplinary techniques were adopted to address specific requirements within these institutions, they became an essential and wider element of the changes within these institutions and society (Foucault, 1995: 138-139).

An interesting example of this tendency for disciplinary techniques to promote wider societal changes relates to the promotion of “healthy living” in modern Western societies. The domain of scientific medicine has discovered the link between obesity, smoking, excessive consumption of alcohol and sedentary lifestyles with many chronic health conditions. In order to address the significant increase in these modern health problems, there has been a concerted effort to promote healthier lifestyles to support good health and a better quality of life for an ageing population.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the benefits of the kinds of disciplinary techniques used to promote better health and well-being also have constitutive effects on subjectivity. The way in which the issue of “weight” for example has become not only a characteristic of an individual, but an “identity” which can mark a person in terms of their successes and failures as a “dieter”, in a manner which is both constraining and enabling (Heyes, 2011: 170-171). Individuals are not only “repressed” by discourse about weight and normalizing judgements about what weight they should be, but they also feel empowered, in a sense, through the information and skills they have learned and how much weight loss they have achieved (Heyes, 2011: 171). In the context of lifestyle related disease, the disciplinary techniques that aim to address these kinds of issues also have normalizing effects within wider society, through the way that we all relate to the norms of body image and healthy lifestyle promoted through societal representations.

The danger of a normalized society for the individual is embodied within the manner in which through the medium of discipline, power becomes implicated in our

everyday social relations, our communication with others and the achievement of our individual goals and projects. Foucault argues that the disciplines can be articulated as a series of “blocks” or “regulated systems”, where the coordination of communicative relations, objective capacities and exercises of power become fused together in a systematic and structured form (Foucault, 2002: 338). Foucault uses the example of an educational setting where particular timetables are followed, space is employed in a specific way and people participate in coordinated activities- this forms a block where relations of power, communication and human capacities interact (Foucault, 2002: 338-339).

Most important however, is the way that disciplinary techniques permeate the human body at the level of its most basic capacity. Through disciplinary techniques that coerced, supervised, monitored, separated, examined and measured, power worked upon the forces of the body at a primary level of the very processes of the body (Foucault, 1995: 137). This forms a relationship of subjection that combines power and discipline together to constitute a disciplinary form of power that colonizes the human body through a “policy of coercions” that are not only economical, but also have particular political benefits (Foucault, 1995: 137-138). Politically speaking, the kind of power that can intervene in human affairs through the management of individual bodies can minimize the risks associated with managing the relationships between these individuals. Due to the human tendency to seek social inclusion we are less likely to resist, thus making us easier to govern.



As Foucault argues, disciplinary power produces not only the required behavior but also determines the processes associated with the desired behavior (Foucault, 1995: 138). “Disciplinary power” as both a form of power and a method of exercising power, relies upon a diversity of techniques, mechanisms and points of application, which render it an “anatomy of power” (Foucault, 1995: 215). By an “anatomy of power” Foucault is emphasizing the structural nature of disciplinary power and the manner in which it is constituted as an arrangement that cannot be located in one place. Disciplinary power can be understood as a framework embodying many different levels of influence which can be utilized within institutions, familial relations and by already established forms of authority or government (Foucault, 1995: 215). Indeed, the combination of power and disciplinary techniques, developed largely outside the framework of sovereignty, yet continued to operate in conjunction with juridical structures constituted within the sovereign model (Foucault, 1980: 105).

The model of sovereign power was adequate to address the problems of power’s operation in feudal society and monarchical forms of political rule in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but failed to account for the mechanisms of power that arose in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Foucault, 1980: 104). According to Foucault, the transformation that took place in the context of power’s objectives in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was associated with the rise of capitalism and its increasing need for labor power (Foucault, 1980: 104-105).

Foucault argues that a juridical-political discourse that reduces power to a negative and repressive mechanism associated only with law and prohibition operates to conceal the productive function of modern power to ensure that society will tolerate its abuses (Foucault, 2008: 86). What Foucault emphasizes is that in understanding power purely in terms of juridical rights and laws, there is a wide domain of human life that is unaccounted for in terms of how power is experienced at the everyday level. The concealing of reality so that individuals think that the power exercised over them is juridical in nature and merely represents a necessary limit for their actions and the actions of others means that power can be more easily tolerated (Foucault, 2008: 86).

The key to understanding the dangers of this combination of rights-based discourse and discipline lies in the constitutive function of disciplinary power and the effects associated with its intervention in human life. Techniques of discipline fashion individual bodies through training techniques that embody continual observation, assessment and supervision, and this molding of the body constitutes a wealth of information about each person and their potentialities (Foucault, 1995: 294-295).

### ***The Importance of Visibility***

Foucault offers an in-depth examination of the functioning of disciplinary power and the manner in which it “makes” individuals (Foucault, 1995: 170). The achievements of disciplinary power are attributed to the simplicity of disciplinary mechanisms and their coercive effects, including methods of observation and surveillance, the centrality of a

“normalizing judgment” and their association within forms of examination (Foucault, 1995: 170). The application of disciplinary techniques takes for granted that relations of force are inherent to methods of observation which in their application to bodies ensures their increased visibility (Foucault, 1995: 170-171). Second, through a centralized form of surveillance, power is then able to coerce multiple bodies economically via a system of relations that only forms a unity at the point of contact with the individual who is observed:

Discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism and which, for the spectacle of public events, substitutes the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes. (Foucault, 1995: 177)

Here the work of Sartre and his account of “the Look” is very important in the sense that the notion of “the gaze” and visibility plays an important role in Foucault’s account of power. The Look refers to the experience that I am not only a subject in the world but an object of the gaze of others: that I am looked at by other people in the world who may view me as an object in their world (Sartre, 2003: 280-281). Sartre argues that in perceiving other people in the world as subject, I must recognize myself as an object for others – a possibility achieved through “shame” and my recognition that I am seen by and judged by other human beings (Crowell, 2012: 220-221). Sartre states that “Being-for-others is a constant fact of my human reality, and I grasp it with my factual necessity

in every thought, however slight, which I form concerning myself.” (Sartre, 2003: 303). This idea that human beings are always open to being observed by others informs Foucault’s account of disciplinary power and as Neve Gordon recognizes, it is central to all the forms of power that Foucault examines (Gordon, 2002: 132). From a Foucauldian perspective subjectivity is always partially constituted by the way that every individual internalises the gaze of the other: subjectivity is always inter-subjectively constituted.

Visibility, via disciplinary surveillance, is central to power as Foucault’s discussion of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon demonstrates. Foucault describes Bentham’s Panopticon as the “architectural figure” of the combination of “individualization” and “exclusion” that is inherent to the workings of power (Foucault, 1995: 199-200). The Panopticon, as Foucault describes it, embodies a peripheral building with a tower at its center, from which all individual cells or rooms within the building are able to be observed from the central position (Foucault, 1995: 200).

Those inside each cellular space cannot see each other nor the observer in the central tower, yet the presence of an outer and inner window in each cell, enabled all individuals to be observed by the those in the tower at all times (Foucault, 1995: 200). This arrangement could be employed within a variety of institutional settings such as prisons, hospitals and factories, where it would induce a state of continual visibility to ensure smooth operation of power with little effort (Foucault, 1995: 200). The operation of power is ensured by the internalization of the actual or potential surveilling gaze, and

the incapacity to know whether one is actually being watched or not, means that one behaves as though the gaze of the other is always present (Foucault, 1995: 200-201).

Due to their continual visibility, those occupying the individual cells learn to monitor their own behavior, and effectively become their own supervisors and this only occurs because the power exercised is potentially constant yet also invisible: while individuals can be watched at any time, there is no evidence of when this is occurring (Foucault, 1995: 201). Individuals become caught up in the relations of power exercised over them, because they constantly experience their visibility regardless of whether or not they are being seen (Foucault, 1995: 201). It is important to emphasize that this visibility is a subjective experience and it can occur even when one is not observed in reality. This is obviously an economical way to distribute power, where individuals are coerced without physical force to participate in their own subjection to power (Foucault, 1995: 203).

Foucault emphasizes that human beings are not only constantly visible in disciplinary space but that they are also organized in a particular way to ensure the most productive and economical outcome (Foucault, 1995: 143). Disciplinary space is partitioned space, divided into many sections in order to control communicative relations and to ensure the supervision of conduct (Foucault, 1995:143). In the context of the Panopticon, visibility and organization come together to ensure that the prisoner is an object of others' gaze and never the subject who sees and interacts with others (Foucault,

1995: 200). For Foucault, "... the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they themselves are the bearers." (Foucault, 1995: 201).

While the metaphor of Bentham's Panopticon represents the spirit of disciplinary power and the way it operates within modern society, Foucault has argued that it does not fully represent the intricacies of his analysis of power. The Panopticon is merely an ideal representation of the totalizing, incessant and instantaneous operation of power, and does not reflect the full reality of the heterogeneity of power (Foucault, 1996: 257). Foucault does not believe that power is able to render transparent all that it turns its gaze upon, but draws attention to power's "impotence" and its need for continuous re-development (Foucault, 1996: 257-258). As its domain is human life in all its instability, power's sphere of influence contains within it the seeds of its undoing, as Foucault states:

Power is not omnipotent or omniscient--quite the contrary! If power relationships have produced forms of investigation, of analysis, of models of knowledge, etc., it is precisely not because power was omniscient, but because it was blind, because it was in a state of impasse. (Foucault, 1996: 259)

Foucault emphasizes that for disciplinary power to work at its best it should bring order to human multiplicity in conformity with three conditions: it must order and regulate as efficiently as possible through engendering little economic and political cost;

it must render its effects expansively throughout society without undermining its intensity; and it must connect its effects with the productivity of societal institutions (Foucault, 1995: 218). It achieves this through organizing the diverse network of individual capacities and human relationships around a set of standards or norms that define and distribute the value of each individual (Foucault, 1995: 183).

### ***Power and Norms***

Within disciplinary space, human beings are judged by themselves and others in reference to behavioral norms or standards, where non-conformance to expected levels of skill, achievement or behavior are both measurable and punishable (Foucault, 1995: 178-179). Disciplinary power normalizes through its corrective capacity, reducing the extent to which individuals depart from the norm through correct training of the body (Foucault, 1995: 179-180). Normalization, or the distribution of individuals around a set of standards, occurs through comparison of individuals, hierarchically marking differences, homogenizing individuals in conformity to norms and then penalizing and excluding those who occupy the outer limits of what is acceptable (Foucault, 1995: 182-183). The gaze that ensures this distribution of individuals around a set of norms is exemplified in the ritual of the *examination*, which draws on the visibility imposed by disciplinary mechanisms to closely connect power and knowledge (Foucault, 1995: 184-185).

Foucault emphasizes that power should not be analyzed merely at the level of institutions, but in its effects within multiple social and private relations (Foucault, 1996:

210). Power's colonization of multiple human domains constitutes an extensive political space where relations of power become subject to greater consolidation and coordination (Foucault, 1996: 210-211). Discipline aims to constitute particular capacities in individuals that intensify their abilities without increasing their critical independence (Ransom, 1997: 30-31). This is achieved through power's effects on the body: effects which do not depend upon power being "internalized in people's consciousness" (Foucault, 1996: 209). Foucault does not view power as a unified structural phenomenon, arguing instead that power is a "multiplicity of force relations" navigating the full breadth of human experience, because it originates from multiple spaces and creates a "complex strategical situation" with numerous consequences and effects (Foucault, 2008: 92-93).

As power relations emerge from multiple sources they are closely connected with many and varied aspects of human life, including the private and family domain, social relationships, the economy, and relations based on knowledge (Foucault, 2008: 94). This is an integral aspect of being-in-the-world, of human existence as an inter-subjective experience. With this in mind, I will provide a more detailed account of how power mediates subjectivity through an examination of the relationship between power and knowledge relations in modern society.



## **POWER/KNOWLEDGE**

Foucault theorizes a complex interaction between power and knowledge whereby the observed individual becomes a source of knowledge: both in terms of what they know and in the context of what can be known about them (Foucault, 2002: 83-84).

Disciplinary power provides the foundation for the productivity of the power/knowledge relationship in its embodiment of practices of observation that makes knowledge about individuals possible and in the way it constitutes skilled, knowing and productive individuals who become sources of knowledge (Foucault, 2002: 83-84). Foucault illustrates the overlapping functions of disciplinary techniques and knowledge in reference to institutions such the factory, where workers develop a knowledge concerning their labor which is then obtainable through their visibility (Foucault, 2002: 83-84). The power of disciplinary surveillance that arises from observation in these types of institutions allows further documentation, ordering and the possibility of comparing and contrasting individual workers, thus enabling a further form of knowledge which includes information “about” the individual (Foucault, 2002: 84).

The mechanisms of modern power and their many methods of constituting bodies of knowledge about individuals through observation, measurement, documentation and comparison have allowed power and knowledge to circulate throughout society (Foucault, 1980: 102). According to Foucault, in modern society there is an encounter between the normalizing effects of disciplinary power, informed by the human sciences

and their associated knowledge, and the traditional juridical discourse of laws associated with sovereign power (Foucault, 1980: 106-107). Foucault explains how disciplinary power has exploited the language of rights and law to gain legitimacy for its norms, creating through this encounter a new role for scientific discourse as a supposedly impartial mediator (Foucault, 1980: 107).

In identifying the significance of the relationship between power and scientific discourse, Foucault has in mind the accumulated knowledge of the social, psychiatric and medical sciences and their increasing importance to politics and the state. In particular Foucault points out that throughout the eighteenth century, the art of medicine gained an increasingly important foothold within the administration of the state, leading to a “medico-administrative” knowledge concerning society and an increasing power of the medical profession (Foucault, 1980: 176). This is important for human life because the individual comes to understand themselves as an object of scientific knowledge. As Foucault argued in *The Birth of the Clinic*, the clinical practice of medicine became a form of knowledge through transformations that included a re-structuring of the hospital system, a new relation between “medical experience” and “public assistance” and the appropriation of the patient in an enclosed, organized and stable space (Foucault, 1994: 196). Foucault develops the notion of the hospital as a normalizing institution in *Discipline and Punish*, emphasizing its parallels with the panoptic techniques of the

prison and factory. Consider the following statement:

Hence, no doubt, the importance that has been given for so long to the small techniques of discipline, to those apparently insignificant tricks that it has invented, and even to those 'sciences' that give it a respectable face; hence the fear of abandoning them if one cannot find any substitute; hence the affirmation that they are at the very foundation of society, and an element in its equilibrium, whereas they are a series of mechanisms for unbalancing power relations definitively and everywhere; hence the persistence in regarding them as the humble, but concrete form of every morality, whereas they are a set of physio-political techniques. (Foucault, 1995: 223)

This passage from *Discipline and Punish* emphasizes that the status of scientific knowledge in modern society supports the techniques of power, as it is difficult to resist the power that is validated through scientific knowledge with traditional sovereign rights and disciplinary techniques intertwining to form the framework of power in modern society (Foucault, 1980: 108). Arrangements of power/knowledge in modern society have ensured the success of political control of individuals without any need for overt coercive tactics (Allen, 1991: 426). One example of this is the modern workplace. Think of the set

of knowledge and skills that we must achieve to enable us to participate in our professional roles. As individuals we must acquire the knowledge to meet the standards set by our chosen profession and information about us is acquired by the organization of workplace to ensure we meet the standards. There is little need for outside coercion to ensure that individuals achieve these skills: we judge ourselves according to our capacity to achieve the standards set and how we progress in our professions depends upon it.

Normalization constitutes effective control of human conduct, through the general power of norms characterized by continual visibility and the categorization of individuals in relation to hierarchical limits (Foucault, 1996: 197). For Foucault, subjective experience corresponds to a multiplicity of subjective states that relate to different aspects of our experiences in the world and this becomes apparent when Foucault argues that subjectivity is a “form” rather than a “substance” (Foucault, 2003a: 33). Foucault also argues against trying to establish a particular identity in favor of forging relations with our selves through creativity and invention (Foucault, 1996: 385).

### ***The History of Sexuality***

From a Foucauldian perspective, it is important for every individual to recognize the relationship between knowledge and disciplinary power in order to recognize the possibilities inherent to the character of our lived experience. Foucault alerts us to the dangers of ignoring this relationship with his analysis of the links between power, scientific knowledge and sexuality in modern society. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault elaborates the way in which modern forms of scientific knowledge are mediated

by traditional practices of confession, whose truth-producing aims were supported by an intricate relationship with power (Foucault, 2008: 58-59). In the Christian tradition, sex was the favored subject matter of confessional practice situated within the framework of a power relationship with constitutive effects on the confessing subject (Foucault, 2008: 61-62). Because the individual is absolved or pardoned through their confession, they are effectively transformed by the relations of power immanent to the confessional discourse, which extracts from them a disclosure of truth (Foucault, 2008: 62). By confession, Foucault refers to the measures through which individuals are driven to create and express to others, a “discourse of truth” about their own sexuality that embodies significant consequences for subjective experience (Foucault, 1980: 215-216).

Foucault argues that modern society has “...pursued the task of producing true discourses concerning sex, and this by adapting—not without difficulty—the ancient procedure of confession to the rules of scientific discourse.” (Foucault, 2008: 67-68). This opened up human sexuality to standards of normalization, to be classified as normal or abnormal in terms of deviance from the accepted standards of society (Foucault, 2008: 68). Foucault argues:

Thus sex gradually became an object of great suspicion; the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and our existence, in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the fragment of darkness that

we each carry within us: a general signification, a universal secret, an omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends. (Foucault, 2008: 69)

Foucault's reflections of normalizing power will be taken up again within my applied analysis of power Section Two, where I will examine the notion that the socio-political responses to the drug and crime problems in Cabramatta worked to shape the way in which members of the community interpreted their subjective experiences. Foucault's insights on the constitutive processes of power/knowledge reveal how aspects of the response to the crime and drug problems can be understood as discursive practices that were constitutive of constrained forms of subjectivity for members of the Cabramatta community. Within my Foucauldian analysis of the way in which power mediated the lived experience of the Cabramatta community, I will draw extensively on Foucault's key points about the significance of the relationship between power and knowledge.

## **BIO-POWER**

Foucault explicates the concept of *human sexuality* as a linking point between two developments of modern power which effectively allowed power/knowledge to micro-manage human life: the political role of human sexuality in the control of individual

bodies, and its significance for the control of populations (Foucault, 2008: 145). While disciplinary power and its concern with the individual is the first dimension of the development of modern power, biopower is the term Foucault gives to the later expansion of power that arose in response to the problems of the individual as a member of a biological population.

Foucault theorizes disciplinary power and biopower as two “poles” around which modern power came to control, regulate and manage life (Foucault, 1991a: 262). Biopower concerns itself with human life at the level of population, monitoring and intervening in the conditions that support the shared biological aspects of human beings as members of a populace (Foucault, 2008: 139). Disciplinary power’s constitution of a disciplined individual renders subjects amenable to the practices of biopower which measure, manage and optimize the biological characteristics of human beings via their membership in the population (Foucault, 2008: 141).

According to Foucault, modern power involved two “seizures” of power over the body, where discipline produced controllable, punishable, and observable bodies, before power addressed the body in its membership of the population, where it could be managed, controlled and regulated at the level of its biological characteristics (Foucault, 2003b: 242-243). The many dimensions of human existence thus became objects of enquiry under the umbrella of a bio-politics that was concerned with all domains of human life (Foucault, 2003b: 244-245). Foucault states:

Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem.

(Foucault, 2003b: 245)

In other words, biopower has politicized the processes of life and death, through adopting a bio-political response to human life that monitors and regulates characteristics of the population via measurement, scientific and educational discourse, and institutional intervention. An example of a biopolitical problem is one of smoking related diseases. The probability of cancer, emphysema, heart disease and other smoking related pathologies have been measured and there has been a concerted effort through education and through direct intervention to address the threat to the health of the population. There has been legislation concerning where smoking is permitted (banned from hotels, restaurants and some public spaces), who can purchase tobacco (over 18 years of age and a further push in Tasmania to ban the purchase of cigarettes by future generations born after a particular date) and how cigarettes are to be specifically packaged (health warnings and plain packaging).

The techniques associated with biopower allowed medical and scientific knowledge to prevent or delay death and maximize the potential of human life, intervening at the level of our shared biological characteristics (Foucault, 1991a: 264-265). While traditionally life was at the mercy of the arbitrary nature of death, the



emergence of modern power linked knowledge and power to life and its processes, providing biological life with a political foundation (Foucault, 1991a: 264-265). Death can be delayed through advances in medical knowledge and politicized through discourse, as Foucault states:

What we are dealing with in this new technology of power is not exactly society (or at least not the social body, as defined by the jurists), nor is it the individual-as-body. It is a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads, that while they may not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted.  
(Foucault, 2003b: 245)

Biopower's interventions colonize everyday life, as evidenced by forms of pejorative societal discourse that are concerned with reproductive practices, well balanced diets, preventative medicine, safe sexual practices, drinking in moderation and exercise plans. These discourses and the practices that they embody are aimed at regulating and prolonging life through promoting a particular idea of health and emphasizing our responsibility to attain it. The biological health of individuals becomes a social and political concern, and the pressure to conform to the ideals of normality becomes the most pressing factor for human life.

For Foucault, power is subjectifying in two distinct ways; it makes individuals subject to themselves, relating them to their own identity in a specific way; and it makes individuals subject to others through domination (Foucault, 2003a: 130). Disciplinary power is focused on individual bodies ensuring their productivity and docility, while biopower manages and controls the issues that affect the population as a whole (Foucault, 2003b: 249). Homogeneity is the aim of biopower and this is achieved through engendering a stability that aims to maintain the integrity of the whole, by focusing on “general biological processes” rather than individual bodies (Foucault, 2003b: 248-249).

Techniques of biopower supported power/knowledge as an agent of change within human life in the sense that the knowledge gained through the increased visibility of the details of human existence allowed power to effectively intervene to enhance and prolong life (Foucault, 2008: 142). The most significant effect of biopower upon human lived experience is that rather than being the subject of occasional and sporadic sovereign intervention, human life became the subject of constant regulation, correction and normalization within a multitude of distinct yet related domains (Foucault, 2008: 143-144). This has important implications for understanding the possibilities open to us as individual subjects who are also members of a population subject to the power of normalization. The implications of the constitution of our subjectivities through the techniques of disciplinary/biopower will be taken up within my discussion in Chapter Three. An exploration of the importance of the relationship between power and freedom

for Foucault's account of subjectivity will help shed light on the possibilities available for modern individuals to resist the techniques of modern power.

### **Chapter Three: Foucault's Account of Subjectivity**

The extent to which a society's regulatory interventions have become acceptable to us is a warning sign for Foucault that we have become agents of our own subjugation (Foucault, 2008: 144). However, Foucault makes a distinction between productive self-subjectification and its creative possibilities and oppressive forms of self-subjectification which are forced upon us and are presented as necessary. In modern society, struggles against the subjugating practices of power take the form of resistances against particular forms of modern subjectivity engendered by the functions of a type of power that aims to integrate individuals into the structure of the state (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 212-216). According to Foucault, we require not only liberation from the state into which we have been integrated, but also freedom from the self-understandings imposed upon us (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 216).

## THE IMPORTANCE OF MERLEAU-PONTY'S ACCOUNT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In trying to understand Foucault's conception of subjectivity in the context of his rejection of the Cartesian account of the self <sup>5</sup>, it is helpful to examine the work of Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty accepts the relationship between knowledge and the existence of a conscious subject, but rejects the Cartesian understanding of subjectivity whereby consciousness is the ground of all knowledge, including knowledge of the outside world (Matthews, 2002: 89-90). Merleau-Ponty argues that human self-consciousness is a bodily experience in that as human beings in a world we inhabit, "live" or "enact" our bodies (Carman, in Crowell, 2012: 274-275). The subjective experience of my embodied self gives me knowledge of the world in which I act, and I cannot acquire knowledge through separating myself from my bodily experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 75).

Merleau-Ponty states:

Our body, to the extent that it moves itself about, that is, to the extent that it is inseparable from a view of the world and is that view itself brought into existence, is the condition of possibility, not only of the geometrical synthesis, but of all expressive

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<sup>5</sup> See Foucault's comments in his 1978 interview with D Trombadori (Foucault, 2002: 251).

operations and all acquired views which constitute the cultural world. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 388)

While Foucault's approach to understanding the complexity of the relationship between human beings and the world was influenced by the phenomenological approach represented by Merleau-Ponty, his concern was to "...question the category of the subject, its supremacy, its foundational function." (Foucault, 2002: 247). In this context, the problem that I will explore from within a Foucauldian framework is how individuals who are shaped by power, still retain their agency. Foucault states:

...I do indeed believe that there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere. I am very skeptical of this view of the subject and very hostile to it. I believe, on the contrary, that the subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, of liberty, as in Antiquity, on the basis, of course, of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment. (Foucault, 1988: 50-51)

Foucault's historical elaboration of the way in which culture and society shapes the modern individual emphasizes the extent to which scientific objectification of

individuals and the divisive effects of isolating practices, mediate human subjectivity (Foucault, Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 208). Because power structures possible and actual actions, it presupposes the existence of acting agents whose subjective interaction has a degree of freedom (Foucault, 2002: 340). Remembering that as beings-in-the-world, every human being is caught up within the web of power, it is a feature of the way we experience the world. However, those within every power relationship are also acting agents who are always already situated within a space or domain of action and possibility constituted by power (Foucault, 2002: 341). In other words, power produces acting subjects who can choose from various alternatives and create possibilities within a world that is structured by power, struggle, resistance and freedom (Foucault, 2002: 340-342). According to Allen (2001) Foucault's analyses of power as constitutive of human subjective experience provides an account of the manner in which subjectivity is shaped within a social, historical and cultural framework, providing insights into the "...conditions of possibility for subjectivity and agency in modern, Western, industrialized societies." (Allen, 2001: 136).

## AGENCY

For Foucault, relations of power are underpinned by two necessary conditions; that on each side of the power relationship there is recognition of the human capacity for action, and that relations of power ensure that this capacity for action can be actualized (Foucault, 2002: 341-342). Foucault argues that power relationships must not only recognize human agency but must also preserve the agency of those upon whom power is exercised and this is achieved through the way that power acts not upon human beings but “upon their actions” (Foucault, 2002: 340). Foucault distinguishes between the nature of power which recognizes and preserves human agency and violence which acts upon human beings themselves and in its implementation fails to preserve human agency. According to Foucault violence in its direct and physical action upon human beings works to close off possibilities for further action or response, while power relationships are dependent upon a realm of possibility inscribed by human action (Foucault, 2002: 340-341).

Power is imbued within society and is intricately and dynamically inter-twined with other forms of human relations in multiple ways which support many forms of strategic domination, both at the local level and in more institutionalized and systematic forms (Foucault, 1980: 142). The dominating effects of power operate through forms of consolidation that are rendered as painless as possible for individuals. This is the case with disciplinary power in its combination with the techniques of biopower, whose



regulative and organizational capacities are able to intervene very efficiently in the realm of everyday life (Foucault, 2003b: 242-243). While there is no escape from a power which is “always already there” this does not entail that power is totally dominating (Foucault, 1980 :141-142).

For Foucault, human subjects are constituted through their social situatedness, yet they retain their agency through acting, making choices and adopting attitudes towards their experience within this framework (Bevir, 1999: 67). This is important for understanding that although the socially situated character of human life shapes our subjective experiences, this does not necessarily undermine the possibility of meaningful acts of resistance. As Foucault argues, in relating to ourselves, to society and to others in a way that embodies a spirit of questioning and resistance, we adopt a critical attitude that is “akin to virtue” (Foucault, 1997b: 24-25). By “virtue” Foucault draws attention to the role of critique which is one of supporting “desubjugation” in the context of our willingness to question the power that has shaped us (Foucault, 1997b: 32).

Amy Allen (2011: 47) argues that Foucault’s critique of Kantian transcendental subjectivity provides a clue as to how Foucault theorizes the possibility of a meaningful subjectivity constituted through power. Consider the following statement:

Far from a blanket rejection of the very possibility of a subject capable of agency, autonomy, or self-reflexivity, the call for the end of man is instead a call for a critical

interrogation and transformation of the particular  
conception of transcendental subjectivity that was first  
formulated by Kant and later taken up by phenomenology.  
(Allen, 2011: 47-48)

Allen argues that Foucault inverts the Kantian account of autonomy – free commitment to a universal morality – to an understanding of autonomy that embodies the notion of a “free questioning of what appears to be necessary”, whereby individuals demonstrate and achieve their autonomy through opening spaces of resistance. (Allen, 2011: 50-51). On Allen’s interpretation, there is a particular kind of autonomy that is compatible with our constitution as subjects through power that involves our ability to reflect in a critical way on our situation and to purposely transform ourselves (Allen, 2011: 51). Foucault’s notion of autonomy reveals the contingent character of knowledge and the impossibility of engaging in acts of self-transformation and critical questioning outside the influence of power (Allen, 2011: 51).

The impossibility of achieving autonomy (in the sense that Allen identifies) outside of relations of power is brought out particularly well in Foucault’s analysis of the historical deployment of sexuality. Foucault claims that our conceptions of sexuality are constituted by power, thus in trying to “liberate” our sexuality we are really only accepting the image of sexuality that power has created (Foucault, 2008: 156-157).

Foucault’s focus in *The History of Sexuality* is to disabuse us of the notion that the

relationship between power and sex is only characterized by repression and that discourse about sex is a way to resist or transform the prohibitions that power appears to have forced upon us (Foucault, 2008: 6). The central point that Foucault wishes to make is that despite our predisposition to think of power as repressing sex, the relationship between power and sex produces a flourishing discourse on sexuality (Sheridan, 1980: 165-166). In order to make this point, Foucault questions the historical and conceptual validity of what he terms the “repressive hypothesis (Foucault, 2008: 10). The repressive hypothesis is based on the view that power is ultimately repressive by nature and Foucault raises three reservations about the repressive nature of power in its connection with sexuality: the idea that sexuality was repressed historically; the notion that repression represents the full range of power’s techniques; and the neutrality of the discourse aimed at overcoming repression itself (Foucault, 2008: 9-11).

The main concern for Foucault is to elaborate the ways in which sex is connected to power in our society and the effects this has on our lived experience in the context of the possibilities associated with power’s intensely productive nature. Repression can be understood as merely one element among many multiple and diverse strategies of power, to produce silences, discourses, prohibitions and forms of knowledge concerned with central aspects of human life (Sheridan, 1981: 170). Foucault promotes an account of human subjectivity that emphasizes the importance of self-creation (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 237).

Foucault connects the notion of self-creation with a capacity to engage in a refusal of who we are: a refusal that grounds attempts to resist forms of individuality forced upon us in modern society (Foucault, 2002: 336). This relates directly to the account of autonomy outlined above by Allen (2011: 51), in that our attempts at self-creation through resisting socially constituted forms of individuality or self-understandings can be understood as a demonstration of individual autonomy. To fully understand the politically creative possibilities for Foucault's subjects it is necessary to explore the intricacies of the relationship that Foucault theorizes between power and freedom.

#### **NIETZSCHEAN AGONISM AND THE PROBLEM OF RESISTANCE**

Central to Foucault's account of subjectivity is the importance assigned to agonistic engagement. By the term agonism, Foucault is referring to a relationship of reciprocal provocation that presupposes a degree of freedom on both sides (Foucault, 2002: 342). To better explain the importance of agonism in Foucault's work I refer to a passage from Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, where the duality between the

Apollonian arts and the Dionysian arts is explored. Nietzsche states:

The two creative tendencies developed alongside one another, usually in fierce opposition, each by its taunts forcing the other to more energetic production, both perpetuating in a discordant concord that agon which the term *art* but feebly dominates...

(Nietzsche, 1956, BT, 1:19)

This statement reveals the kind of relationship that is expressed within Foucault's appropriation of the concept of agonism. In particular, the notion that the opposition between two creative tendencies gives rise to a struggle that is productive for both sides is important for Foucault's own account.

Brent Pickett traces the general themes of agonism and resistance throughout Foucault's work, noting a "permanent agonistic stance" that was present even before Foucault's explicit analyses of power in his genealogical and ethical periods (Pickett, 1996: 450). Foucault's appropriation of Nietzsche's account of the agonistic struggle for truth allows him to adopt an oppositional account of knowledge that illuminates its political character (Theile, 1990: 916-917). While knowledge will have political utility, its uses must be decided at the local level, by subjects who struggle without a pre-determined goal already decided for them by social or class objectives and aims (Theile, 1990: 917).

This is at the core of Foucault's account of agonistic subjectivity, which is not concerned with the large scale organization of struggle, but with illuminating the possibilities for individual creative engagement (Theile, 1990: 917). Because power is present at all levels of human existence and has a productive and creative function, resistance must also be diffuse, particular, local, multiple and widespread (Pickett, 1996: 458). Resistance is more than refusal: it is a creative transformation within a relationship of force that creates a relationship of power itself (Foucault, 1997a: 167-168). While power relations are described by Foucault in terms of their agonistic possibilities, he also emphasizes that the potential for struggle and resistance can be undermined when power relations become integrated with other forms of human social relations (Foucault, 2002: 338).

Nancy Fraser draws out a particular problem for Foucault's account of resistance that is grounded in his rejection of the liberal normative framework of power (Fraser, 1981: 283). Fraser argues that as power circulates through the social body it cannot be captured by a liberal understanding of power based upon the model of sovereignty (Fraser, 1981: 280). As Foucauldian power is not primarily exercised within the sovereign or juridical framework, the resistance that accompanies it is equally outside these traditional structures and as such cannot be grounded in the notion of a subject of rights (Fontana & Bertani, Foucault, 2003b: 280-281).

Fraser argues that Foucault's analyses of power reveal his work to be politically engaged, particularly in the context of his concerns with modern society, yet his account

of power is not supported by a normative foundation that would allow him to make distinctions between good/bad forms of power (Fraser, 1981: 282 & 286). In order to understand how and why individuals can and do resist modern forms of power, it is important to examine the coherence of Foucault's theorization of resistance in the context of his account of socially mediated subjectivity. Foucault draws attention to various power struggles within our society that question the standing of the individual and the role of power/knowledge (Foucault, 2003a: 129-130). The common ground of these struggles is the motivation to resist the divisive and individualizing effects of modern power (Foucault, 2003a: 130). However, without any sort of account of what would constitute legitimate exercises of power—what Fraser (1981: 273) discusses in terms of “...the suspension of the normative liberal framework of legitimacy” — critics are on strong ground when they argue that Foucault is left without an explicit normative foundation for his account of power. However, Foucault's theorization of the relationship between freedom and power suggests that his account of power is informed by an implicit moral framework that supports his attempt to make a distinction between different kinds of power relations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Fraser notes that while it is theoretically possible that Foucault may be presupposing an alternative normative framework, she is “...unable to develop it concretely.” (Fraser, 1981: 283).

## **POWER AND FREEDOM: A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP**

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are “free”. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available”. “At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom”. (Foucault, 2002: 342)

In the argument presented above, Foucault clearly associates the notion of freedom with subjectivity and human possibility. Remembering that Foucault makes a clear distinction between power and violence, it is clear that without the prospect of some form of choice or alternative possibility for action, there is no relation of power for Foucault.

Foucault theorizes a dialectic relationship between power and freedom emphasizing that power relationships are grounded upon an unyielding freedom that is the pre-condition for the exercise of power and which always supports the possibilities for resistance (Foucault, 2002: 342). The notion of a necessary freedom is suggested by Foucault’s account of power in that power relations cannot exist without individual who are free (Ransom, 1997: 124). Indeed, a dynamic space is constituted from the co-



existence of resistance and power and it is within this space that freedom creates the conditions for power and resistance to be meaningful (Ransom, 1997: 123-124). In order to fully elaborate the role that freedom plays in Foucault's account of power, it is necessary to explore the complex understanding of freedom that Foucault adopts within his account of power.

An analysis of Foucault's account of freedom must account for how it is possible for freedom to underpin power's existence and yet be produced and shaped by power. There is also the practical question concerning the way in which individuals experience power in everyday life. If freedom underpins power relations, then how can we account for the way in which we experience particular forms of oppression and subjection as undermining of our freedom? A close reading of Foucault's writing reveals a highly complex relationship between power and freedom.

The literature reveals the intricacy of this relationship within Foucault's work. Crucial to Foucault's account of power is the role played by a necessary freedom or the "plebian element" for understanding of the ways in which individuals are never fully constituted through power (Ransom, 1997: 124-126). Ransom takes a Nietzschean approach to explaining the importance of this plebian aspect, arguing that while disciplinary power constitutes us as subjects, there is a degree of selectivity whereby not all aspects of our individuality are shaped (Ransom, 1997: 118-120). However, in raising the notion of the plebian aspect of power relations, the importance of the "reversibility" of power and discourse is also important, particularly in the context of the "...plurality of

subjective forms present in each individual.” (Ransom, 1997: 121-122). Resistance is enabled by the way in which the plurality of subject positions I take up leads to tensions within my experiences: I reflect on the constraining aspects of my experiences in one role I play from the vantage point of other roles I take up (Ransom, 1997: 122). There is much more to Ransom’s discussion of this particular interpretation of freedom in Foucault’s writing and I will draw on his insights concerning Foucault’s account of power again in Chapter Four.

A different understanding of the role of freedom in Foucault’s account of power is put forward by Neve Gordon (1999) who argues for an ontological understanding of freedom as the condition of the possibility of power and subjectivity within Foucault’s work. Gordon emphasizes that Foucault conception of the subject as a “being-in-the-world” acknowledges Heidegger’s account of freedom where “man is the possibility of freedom” (Gordon, 1999: 405-406). As I discussed earlier in the introduction to my thesis, Heidegger articulates human being as Dasein; an entity for whom its being is a matter of concern for it (Heidegger, 1996, 4: 10). As Dasein’s being matters for it, Dasein gains self-understanding through the possibilities provided by the world as well as through particular situations Dasein finds itself in and through possibilities it has chosen for itself (Heidegger, 1996, 4: 10).

Heidegger states that: “Dasein is the possibility of Being-free *for* its ownmost potentiality of being.” (Heidegger, 1996, 31: 135). In this statement, Heidegger emphasizes that as Dasein, human beings take up their possibilities in the world, letting

some opportunities pass and adopting others (Heidegger, 1996, 31: 135). For Foucault too, subjects are necessarily free in the sense that freedom is a condition of their possibility and that their status as free beings is the condition for the operation of power (Gordon, 1999: 406). An important point to take from Gordon's interpretation is that for Foucault, freedom is not merely an empirical characteristic of human individuals but a condition for human being.

Another sense of freedom can be drawn from Foucault's work, that of freedom in its actualization in the world. This is a dimension of freedom explored by Thomas Dumm (1996) who emphasizes the way disciplinary power enables a space of freedom to emerge. When attention is drawn to the conditions placed upon human freedom, it is in the context of practices of freedom in the world, where we are subject to constraints and limitations that shape the way we express our freedom (Dumm, 1996: 78).<sup>7</sup> Foucault's writing suggests that freedom is more than the condition of human possibility; it is a way of life that must be actively practiced through conscious choice (Foucault, 1997a: 282-284). Thus this dimension of freedom can be chosen or ignored. Indeed, Foucault promotes freedom as an active self-constitution through situating freedom in the political

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon is critical of this kind of understanding of Foucauldian freedom in the sense that freedom is portrayed as a "human property" (Gordon, 1999: 403).

realm; not as an empty and enclosed space separate to politics, but within its very domain (Dumm, 1996: 3-5).

Freedom in its actualization is an active questioning from within the disciplinary space, pushing at the boundaries to create new limits (Dumm, 1996: 117). Disciplinary power incites its own resistance because the institutions within which it operates are made up of disparate forces which are often in conflict (McHoul & Grace, 1993: 70). The normalizing techniques of power do not always produce homogenous subjects, but rather bring all the individual differences that it seeks to homogenize out in the open, making them visible and providing opportunities for resistance through the very activity of normalization (McHoul & Grace, 1993: 72). This emphasises a similarity with recent narrative theories such as that offered by Alasdair MacIntyre who talks about lived narratives in their unpredictability and their teleological character (MacIntyre, 1984: 215). The point is that our lives are characterized by a unity that comes from shared situations and projects and a disunity that comes from not being the author of one's own life and being subject to constraints within which we live our lives (MacIntyre, 1984: 215) However, MacIntyre emphasises that there are many ways that human lives continue on within these constraints and that as a "story-telling animal", human beings make choices within the story in which they are a part (MacIntyre, 1984: 216).

It is within the realm of possibility shaped by power where Foucauldian freedom is materially situated and actualized. Gordon argues that freedom understood ontologically can explain how we can exercise agency within the ambience of power: the

subject can never be completely constituted by power because freedom is a condition for the possibility of the subject (Gordon, 1999: 413-414). Thus (actualized) practices of freedom depend upon subjects whose freedom is a condition of their possibility (Gordon, 1999: 414).

## **FREEDOM AND GOVERNMENTALITY**

Freedom plays an important role within Foucault's analysis of a consolidated form of power he terms governmentality. Governmentality is defined by Foucault in terms of "...the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other." (Foucault, 1997a: 300). Through his account of governmentality, Foucault expands a narrow notion of government to include not only management of the state, but all forms of directing conduct that act upon the possibilities of others actions and that structure the domain where these actions take place (Foucault, Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 220-221).

Individual freedom as characterized within liberalism with its aim of defending individual liberty against intrusions by state power is rejected outright by Foucault's analysis of governmentality and his critique of liberal rationality when he argues that human freedom is not so much an outcome of liberalism but a requirement for its success

(Hindess, 1996: 124-125). The notion of governmentality was developed in Foucault's later writing, providing a more intricate and illuminating account of the relationship between power and freedom<sup>8</sup>. What Foucault emphasizes in his later work is the manner in which modern freedom is managed by techniques and rationalities of government that imply previous consent, but which are only possible because of the effectiveness of disciplinary power exercised in the past (Hindess, 1996: 131).

At this point it is helpful to provide an explanation of how governmentality differs from disciplinary power and biopower. Through defining the nature of power in terms of "guiding the possibility of conduct", Foucault emphasizes that disciplinary power and biopower are two distinct yet related techniques for managing the behavior, conduct, attitudes and beliefs of human beings as individuals and as members of a population (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 221). According to Foucault, to govern conduct,

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<sup>8</sup> Barry Hindess, although conceding that a shift occurred within Foucault's early and later writing, argues that Foucault's later work on government does not undermine his earlier focus on domination, but instead provides a more complex and well developed account of power (Hindess, 1996: 130-131). Gordon (1999) suggests that Foucault was merely examining different perspectives of the same concerns that were always central to his work. There is some debate surrounding the notion of a conceptual shift within Foucault's understanding of power between his earlier and later work (see Sluga, 2011). Whether a break took place within Foucault's writing on power, or whether Foucault merely elaborated different perspectives of the same problem, as John Grumley (2006: 61-62) perceptively argues, the notion of freedom and its close relationship with power is similarly fluid and open to interpretation.

or to exercise power through governmentality, is to shape the possibilities within the realm in which human beings act (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 221). In explaining power in terms of governmentality, Foucault is able to emphasize that as disciplinary subjects and as members of a population, we are still free human beings who act within a space of possibility:

When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterizes these actions by the government of men by other men-in the broadest sense of the term-one includes an important element: freedom. (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 221)

Governmentality is a consolidation of all forms of power, thus it is conditional upon ontologically free subjects whose future actualized freedoms it aims to shape (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 221). The question of governmentality can be approached from the perspective of the government of the self and the relationship between self-understanding and our relations with others (Foucault, 1997a: 88). Self-understanding is shaped through particular societal practices known as technologies of the self, which always inform the manner in which individuals act upon themselves. (Foucault, 2003a: 146). Technologies of power and technologies of the self are intricately related through the way our self-understandings are shaped by societal values (Taylor,

2011: 173). In taking up the problem of how individuals constitute themselves through an exercise of “the self on the self” Foucault touches on the question of how human beings can creatively engage with their self-understandings in order to attain a particular way of living in the world (Foucault, 1997a: 282). This is an achievement of what Foucault terms the “care of oneself”, a notion related to the government of the self through action, which can transform the experience of the self within the realm of governmentality (Foucault, 1997a: 87-88).

Freedom is exercised through “care of the self” which Foucault defines in terms of knowledge of the self and the capacity to understand the truths through which the self has been constituted (Foucault, 1997a: 282-285). What is achieved through reflective practices of the self is a “conversion” of power that has ethical implications for our relations with others (Foucault, 1997a: 288). This goes back to the notion of governmentality in its broader context as a way of governing conduct, in the sense that our efforts at self-government will have implications for the way we govern others and thus for the realm of possibility characterized by the freedom of human beings.

There are limits for human freedom embodied within Foucault’s account of power as governmentality in the context that the actualization of freedom depends upon our capacity to resist domination. Foucault makes it clear that states of domination can clearly limit and constrain our practices of freedom and that in these cases liberation is the condition that supports us to actualize our freedom (Foucault, 1997a: 282-283). This goes to the notion that as relations of power have constituted us in historically particular



ways, the forms our freedom can take are limited to those supported by the historical and social framework within which we live. However, the human individual is never a unitary sovereign subject for Foucault, but rather a form of subject, or a variety of forms corresponding to different relations we have with ourselves (Foucault, 1997a: 290). It is the diversity of the relations we have with ourselves and the different social roles we play that allows for the possibilities of exercising freedom in novel ways.

As I noted earlier, Gordon's reading of Foucault confirms that while we are necessarily situated within the world and therefore within power relations that shape, limit, constitute and constrain us, human beings are also necessarily free in an ontological sense (Gordon, 1999: 414). According to Gordon, this sense of freedom underpins "the care of the self" which presupposes that freedom is an ontological condition of human existence (Gordon, 1999: 409). Foucault argues that care of the self requires knowing "ontologically what you are" in addition to knowing "what you are capable of" (Foucault, 1997a: 288). This ontological sense of freedom, is what is at stake in Foucault's argument that "Freedom is the ontological condition for ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection." (Foucault, 1997a: 284). Thus it is our ontological freedom that underpins our capacity to practice a reflective form of self-constitution that can place limits on power (Foucault, 1997a: 288).

Freedom is ethical in a special sense for Foucault and this is explained in the context of a way of being and acting in the world. For Foucault, the way that freedom was problematized in Ancient Greek understanding is key to his own account, in the

sense of ethics being an “ethos” that has its source within self-understandings and a way of relating to the self that has public and political implications (Foucault, 1997a: 286). Freedom is a way of being-in-the-world for Foucault, yet in order for one’s *ethos* to be “good”, “beautiful”, honorable” and “exemplary”, there is a significant degree of effort required in the context of the relationship on oneself to oneself (Foucault, 1997a: 286).

Foucault’s account of freedom, whether in terms of the call to resist domination, or through the practices of freedom that emerge from his account of self-government is ultimately an account of freedom which cannot be understood outside of the social-political domain (Dumm, 1996: 2). Freedom for Foucault is not an escape from everyday politics, nor is it located in a space free from struggles and complex human dilemmas. Dumm (1996: 3) argues that Foucault tries to make the world more livable by situating freedom firmly within political life. Foucault’s characterization of the political realm as a space of relatively stabilized and consolidated “technologies of power” which govern individuals through practices of normalization emphasizes the detrimental outcomes for human action, while also recognizing that increased control means increased opportunities for resistance (Dolan, 2005: 373). This is the domain of freedom in its political actualization. However, normalizing power targets individuals who are “at liberty” yet whose perspective of reality is open to being shaped through their exposure to disciplinary knowledge (Dolan, 2005: 375).

By situating freedom politically, Foucault not only recovers a notion of freedom that responds to the practical needs of human beings, but he is ultimately supporting what

Dolan refers to as the space of “potential publicness” (Dolan, 2005: 377). Dolan argues that Foucault’s “critical ontology” is committed to freeing a space of the potentially public, a space colonized by biopower and the contestation and resistance that accompanies it (Dolan, 2005: 377). What Dolan is drawing attention to here is the way in which the relationship between power and freedom ensures that any attempt at normalization through biopower will be met with contestation and the politicization of life itself (Dolan, 2005: 375).

As ontological freedom is the condition of the existence of power, it is also the condition of the existence of freedom in its actualization within the domain of power relations. Understood this way, freedom retains all the significance accorded to it by Gordon, who recognizes its indispensability to Foucault’s account of subjectivity. Foucault’s insistence on the strategic nature of power emphasizes the complex relationship between power and freedom, both in terms of power’s strategic mechanisms and the strategies of struggle that are always a possibility within any power relationship (Foucault, 2002: 347).

As Foucault emphasizes, technologies of the self can be constitutive of self-understanding through the efforts of the individual to change the way they relate to themselves (Foucault, 1997a: 225). For Foucault the relationship between subjectivity and truth is not only understandable in terms of the practices of coercion to which we have been subjected, but also in considering the role of practices of self-constitution (Foucault, 1997a: 282). Foucault’s account of power recognizes that subjects are

constituted through power relations and games of truth but also that each individual plays a role in their own constitution through developing different relations of oneself to oneself in more active ways (Foucault, 1997a: 290). Truth, as a set of rules and principles, belongs to the world and is intricately tied up with power relations that circulate throughout society (Foucault, 1980: 132-133). In actively engaging in games of truth, through caring for the self, one can change the rules and the game of truth and create new strategies for interacting with others (Foucault, 1997a: 290-300).

The complex relationship between freedom and power within Foucault's account of governmentality emphasizes the importance of relating to ourselves as free in order to fully develop and practice our freedom. In the next chapter I will examine Foucault's theorization of "the political" as it arises from the relationship between power and freedom that he identifies.

## Chapter Four: Foucault and the Political

But what might be called a society's "threshold of modernity" has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question. (Foucault, 2008: 143)

The aim of this chapter is to explore the meaning of "the political" in Foucault's work in order to more fully articulate the importance of the relationship between power and freedom for lived experience. Central to this discussion is Foucault's focus on the self as a site of resistance and a political response to relations of power. According to Ransom (1997: 155), if politics is understood as the domain where practices of the self and practices of domination interact with the "objects of governance" in all their cooperation, resistance and agonistic relations, then politics can be understood as an "art".

In this chapter, I will examine the ways that the relationship between power and freedom within the social realm creates possibilities for politics. One such possibility is

embodied within the ways in which disciplinary power constitutes possibilities for individual contestation and resistance.

## **THE POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES OF DISCIPLINARY SOCIETY**

Foucault's emphasis on the importance of power within the social realm has challenged traditional ideas about the source of power and its stability. Barry Smart argues that the way in which disciplinary techniques have acted on individuals who live their lives within the social political realm has been considered as engendering a "socialization of the political" and a reduction of politics to an administrative function, leading to an understanding of politics as little more than a systematized form of social management (Smart, 1983: 121). However, the ways in which disciplinary power is exercised over subjects who have the capacity to resist emphasizes the political opportunities embodied within social space.

In trying to at least partially counter representations of the disciplinary political space as impoverished, I refer again to the work of Dumm, who, in writing on Foucault's account of freedom states:

Being free involves not simply knowing our situation but  
knowing how our selves are composed by the spaces we inhabit

and the practices with others we engage. It is a process that must always be political not because there is no escaping domination (a world without domination is the telos of genocide) but because there can be no freedom in the absence of relationships of power. (Dumm, 1996: 153)

According to the view that Dumm presents, freedom requires an understanding of the role power plays in all the spaces we inhabit and it is in this context that our habitation of the social realm is a political experience that must be interrogated.

For Foucault, as a site of power/knowledge, the human body is essential to the proliferation and concentration of power relations within modern society (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983: 113). In modern society it is always a “political economy” of the body, its productive forces, submission, resistance and compliance that is fundamental to the political field of power (Foucault, 1995: 25). The productive body is also a subjected body, politically invested by relations of power that ensure its controlled usefulness (Foucault, 1995: 26). Foucault states:

That is to say, there may be a ‘knowledge’ of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them: this knowledge and

this mastery constitute what might be called the political technology of the body. (Foucault, 1995: 26)

This political technology of bodies is widely dispersed and while it can be employed by the state it is located within another domain: that of the space between the productivity and forces of bodies and the machinery of the state (Foucault, 1995: 26). The political realm for Foucault is represented through the notion of the “body politic” or the arrangement of characteristics and operations utilized as devices, means of communication and support for the relations of power and knowledge that invest bodies and dominate them as objects of knowledge (Foucault, 1995: 28). We cannot understand our present circumstances and why we can and do resist our present arrangements of power without understanding how politics invests the body (Foucault, 1995: 30-31). Paradoxically, the way that disciplinary power functions provides the key to how we can transform and resist it.

According to Ransom the key lies in the notion of plurality in the context of the existence of multiple disciplinary projects and the many possibilities for constituting subjects (Ransom, 1997: 48-49). Disciplinary power creates plural subjects in the sense that there are always variations between subjects within any discipline and also within subjects who are part of many and various disciplinary projects (Ransom, 1997: 48-49). The way human beings internalize disciplinary practices is always open to interpretation,



as just as there are many disciplinary practices with specific rules and norms, disciplinary subjects are never identical (Ransom, 1997: 48).

While human life from beginning to end is shaped by relations of power, the many roles we play in society and the different relations we take towards the many aspects of our subjective experiences places a limit upon power's pervasiveness.<sup>9</sup> Again, this relates to the role of freedom for Foucauldian power in the sense that power is only exercised over subjects who have the capacity to take up different roles, who have opportunities for different forms of interaction with others and whose society embodies some form of choice (Foucault, 2003a: 139). In other words, when one's experience is completely determined by an unavailability of any alternative role or position, there is no power relationship.<sup>10</sup>

The importance of the idea that the self is a complex plurality is revealed in the context of understanding Foucault's main concern with the character of power in modern society: in order for each individual to take responsibility for meaning (to reach maturity, in the Kantian sense) it is necessary to engage in efforts to "develop a complex relationship to the self" (Ransom, 1997: 74-75). Foucault emphasizes the importance of the

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<sup>9</sup> I would like to acknowledge Dr Kim Atkins for emphasising the importance of this point.

<sup>10</sup> Foucault gives the example of slavery and calls this a "physical relationship of constraint" (Foucault, 2003a: 139).

Kantian account of Enlightenment and his notion of immaturity as referring to the ways in an unquestioning acceptance of another's authority in place of our own reasoning (Foucault, 2003a: 45). For Foucault, to free ourselves from immaturity in the Kantian sense we must analyze and reflect upon our limits, to gain understanding of how our history has influenced the way we have constituted our subjectivities (Foucault, 2003a: 53-54).

The notion of plurality plays an important role in Foucault's account of power because the Foucauldian subject constituted through power is not a "substance" but a "form": the different roles individuals take up in society give rise to different self-understandings and different forms of relationship of oneself to oneself (Foucault, 1997a: 290-291). These various forms of self-relationships and self-understandings are all shaped to different degrees in different ways by relations of power.

The capacity for individuals to resist suggests that the limits imposed by disciplinary power constitutes subjects with some capacities for agency, and that these capacities are therefore constituted in association with these limits (Simons, 1995: 82). However, Simons argues that Foucault's account of resistance is what he terms "unbearably light" in the sense that Foucault has failed to convince his readers of the full possibilities for resistance to modern power regimes (Simons, 1995: 83-84). Disciplinary power constitutes a political space that is to some degree impoverished because its aims of docility, conformity and normalization, give rise to techniques that make the individual agents of their own subjection.

## **BIOPOWER AND BIOPOLITICAL SPACE**

While historically power was seen to be mainly deductive, seizing upon human life, its capabilities and its products in order to subjugate and ultimately defeat it, the classical age in western society witnessed a significant transformation of power (Foucault, 2008: 136). This transformation involved an all-encompassing investment of life itself at the level of biological characteristics, in order to ensure the utmost productivity and to organize in detail the aspects of human life that are beneficial for life itself (Foucault, 2008: 136).

Biopolitics serves the ends of government through the knowledge provided through biopolitical management and intervention within populations. The techniques of biopower are central, rendering characteristics of human life calculable in a way that is transformative of human lived experience (Foucault, 1991a: 265). The life at stake in the biopolitical realm is not merely biological life, but life as material existence and as the multiple possibilities and potential forms this life could take (Foucault, 2008: 145). The politicization of life has advantages not only for the exercise of power and for the state institutions that are supported by power relations at the level of everyday day life, the microphysics of power, but also for those who confront organized and systematic forms of power by utilizing this politically inflected life as a tool of resistance (Foucault, 2008: 145).

This transformation of power brought aspects of human life into the realm of politics through the development of forms of power/knowledge that organized and managed a political space where bodies could be known in detail and governed accordingly, as Foucault argues:

For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention. (Foucault, 2008:142)

The expansion of the political realm to include the everyday characteristics and details of human life had significant consequences for the conditions of human existence, for the standing and function of scientific discourse and for the operation of juridical law, ultimately constituting the "normalizing society". (Foucault, 2008: 144-145). Most important however is that the subject who resists power in modern society is a subject who has been shaped by this very power and who resists in terms of a life politicized (Foucault, 2008: 144-145). What is significant in this context is the form of life that Foucault theorizes as being subject to biopower and thus to biopolitical intervention.

As Michael Dillon perceptively argues, biopolitics is underpinned by the notion of a historically “biologised life” providing the basis from which to determine the value or worth of members of the population (Dillon, 2005: 42). As biopolitics invests life it must continually evaluate the life it invests on the basis of scientific knowledge that is constantly in flux, producing different standards and norms for determining life’s value (Dillon, 2005: 41). The techniques of bio-power are essential to contemporary governmentality and its central concern with the regulatory management of the biological, health, and general conditions of life of the population: what Foucault terms a “*bio-politics of the population*” (Foucault, 1991a: 262). Foucault defines biopolitics as a rationalization of “...the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race...” (Foucault, 1997a: 73).

While it was once the case that life was at the mercy of the indiscriminate nature of death, the emergence of modern power linked knowledge and power to life and its processes, providing biological life with a political foundation (Foucault, 1991a: 264-265). According to Foucault, the ancient Platonic model of power based on rationality was reinterpreted through Christianity, resulting in an amalgamation of a rational rule-based political power with a pastoral power concerned with the wellbeing of the community (Dolan, 2005: 373) This “hybrid” power that aims to unify the population, while also securing the life of the individual, became the “rationality of state power” (Dolan, 2005: 373-374). The relationship between power in the social realm and forms of

organized state power is theorized in Foucault's rule of double conditioning, which states that no local strategy of power or resistance can function as a long term transformation if it does not integrate into an overall strategy and neither could any institutional form of power be comprehensive without the sustenance of local tactics and relations (Foucault, 2008: 99). Drawing from this idea, Foucault's political realm is invested by relations of power that are directed at other pre-existing power relations which have objects or individuals as their target; or in other words, Foucault understands the political to be the domain of "supervenient" power relations where political power relations are those which take as their object other "non-supervenient" relations of power (Sluga, 2001: 73).

Foucault argues that the modern state has become the hallmark of all other kinds of power relation; not because the state forms the basis from which all power relations derive, but because state apparatuses have taken up the heterogeneous force relations within society and centralized, organized and "governmentalized" them (Foucault, in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; 224). This implies that the state can be understood in reference to how conduct is guided by disciplinary practices that individualize subjects and make them visible, productive and controlled by techniques of biopower that effect a particular kind of social cohesion that renders populations amenable to being governed (Smart, 1983: 119-121). The political encompasses this domain of organized power relations; power relations that have their foundations in the private and social realms and which support the institutional and governmental structures of power through their coordination (Foucault, 1996: 211). In this context, "the political" in modern society

encompasses a more extensive domain than was previously colonized through the demands and constraints of sovereign right or the limits and injunctions imposed by juridical laws.

## **POLITICS AND SELF-GOVERNMENT: ETHICS AND POLITICS**

The techniques of disciplinary/biopower are pervasive, yet power is also subject to limits inherent to the relationship between power and freedom. In this section, I will bring out the ways in which the relationship between power and freedom within Foucault's account of self-government more fully reveals the political possibilities for individuals. Foucault calls for us to recognize the historical situatedness of our self-understandings and to engage in a "politics of the self" in order to change those practices that have shaped our self-understandings (Foucault, 1993: 222-223). The relationship between the individual and self-understanding is mediated not only by specific forms of power/knowledge, but also through practices of self-constitution that question the necessity of the relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1997a: 281-282). Self-constitution is only possible through our understanding of the rules and principles that underpin the knowledge we have of ourselves, allowing us to recognize who we are and to reflect upon who we may become through caring for ourselves (Foucault, 1997a: 284-285).

In caring for ourselves we practice a form of self-government that has implications for the domain of governing others. As discussed in Chapter Three, the care of the self requires a particular relationship of self-government based on a recognition of our freedom as well as recognition of the limits to which we are subjected and the possibilities for our actions in a field of power. Indeed, the government of the self by the self engenders a kind of permanent political relationship that is theorized by Foucault as containing within it the possibility of a transformative politics (Foucault, 1991a: 362-363).

In order to question and transform the techniques of power that have made us who we are, Foucault asks us to achieve the seemingly impossible: to recognize that we are constituted by power and to find within ourselves a capacity to resist this power (Allen, 2011: 44). Going back to Allen's interpretation of autonomy in Foucault's work, it is possible to understand how we can engage in a politics of the self when the self is politically constituted. Allen argues that "... deliberate self-transformation in Foucault's sense necessarily involves taking up in a transformative way the relations of subjection that have made us who we are." (Allen, 2011: 51).

This relates closely to Foucault's understanding of freedom as our capacity to question, contest and transform the social practices that constitute our subjectivity (Rajchman, 1985: 104-105). The possibility of transformation and self-constitution implies autonomy, but only in the sense in which Allen has identified. For Foucault, as socially and historically situated beings we are already implicated in relations of power



that are always “rooted deep in the social nexus” (Foucault, 2002; 343). Yet Foucault’s recognition of the necessity of a kind of free agency within relations of power (a space of possibilities for action) implies that human beings retain their capacity to question, resist and to choose a particular course of action among others, despite their constitution through power (Foucault, 2003a: 139).

As I emphasized in Chapter Three, the capacity to resist is a form of autonomy that embodies the capacity to critically reflect upon power/knowledge relations and the capacity to engage in self-transformative practices (Allen, 2011: 44). This free questioning is internal to the framework of power and as freedom operates in the domain of power relations any transformation is in the context of utilizing the relations of subjection in novel and revolutionary ways (Allen, 2011: 51). One such possibility is the “care of the self”, which, when supported by a critical attitude, can effectively oppose the effects of disciplinary power and engender a space for refusal and transformation (Ransom, 1997: 155-156). According to Ransom (1997: 155-156) care of the self as an activity of self-constitution that shapes what is provided within the realm of its experience requires an ongoing examination of what is experienced and learned and the capability to assess the actions and ends towards which others are aiming.

Foucault’s “politics of the self” is open to some criticism on the grounds that it does not fully account for the possibility of consensus and the power of solidarity (Allen, 1999: 57; Allen, 2011: 52-53). While there is little explicit theorization of the collective dimension of politics within Foucault’s writing, there are possibilities for drawing out a

collective dimension to Foucault's political thought (Allen, 2011: 52). Foucault recognizes the possibilities for collective politics that arise from an inner experience of community not associated with forms of group solidarity that traditionally emerge from categories such as class, economics or nationality (Foucault, 1988: 212-214). In an interview published in 1979, Foucault draws out the particular character of the Iranian revolution which embodied an expression of a collective will; a collective will of the people to transform not only the political situation but also their political destiny through transforming their own subjectivity (Foucault, 1988: 211-215). Foucault raised the possibility of a collective arising between a plurality of people whose basis for solidarity comes from something more fundamental than the need for political alliance and compromise (Foucault, 1988: 215-219). This revolutionary experience is a fragile yet intense phenomenon that can traverse an entire people despite their significant differences and can provide the impetus for transformation of a political situation (Foucault, 1988: 219).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This "collective will" is a rare occurrence within the political realm, yet in the Iranian context, the people found their collective purpose within themselves, aiming to transform their way of being, their relationships with others, with their culture and with their history (Foucault, 1988: 217-218). According to Foucault, it was the spiritual role that Islam played for the people that allowed this to take place. Although Islam as a religion traditionally underpinned the people's experience and shaped their identity, by living Islam as a revolutionary force, the experience of the people was transformed (Foucault, 1988: 218). In other

Foucault emphasizes that there was a different plane of reality for those people of the revolution who were inspired by something other than the usual conflicts and alliances (Foucault, 1988: 219). What he argues is that while we all act as individuals participating within strategic games of power that create associations and conflicts, on rare occasions, there is something that inspires a form of collective solidarity that comes from an uninterested self; one that stands somewhat apart from prior alliances, conflict and compromises. In the Iranian revolution, this “something” appears to have transcended the traditional political considerations upon which revolutions have historically been based just as it rose above the violent dangers of the revolutionary situation (Foucault, 1988: 219-220). Any transformation must acknowledge the social, cultural and historical circumstances from which it emerges, as transformative action requires its own limits to provide it with a form that can engage with the world. In the context of Iran, Foucault asks whether this revolutionary movement has the potency to go beyond its own limits and question its own foundations (Foucault, 1988: 224).

As Foucault argues, “Revolts belong to history. But, in a certain way, they escape from it.” (Foucault, 2002: 449). In this simple statement Foucault acknowledges that revolts are part of a human story of action shaped within a historical context, yet he also raises the possibility that revolts have at their core something outside this historical

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words, Islam as a spiritual practice provided the unity that supported the collective will and therefore the collective politics of the people within the Iranian revolution.

framework. Again in a later statement, Foucault refers to the irreducible human impulse to make a stand against injustice; an impulse that can never be ruled out by any government (Foucault, 2002: 449). It is this human impulse, this freedom that is the intricately intertwined with power.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In this section I have provided an exposition of the key concepts underpinning Foucault's account of power. I have examined Foucault's analyses of disciplinary power and biopower and have outlined their constitutive effects on human subjectivity in their association with knowledge. Foucault's account of subjectivity was explored in relation to his account of freedom which I argued shed further light on the complex relationship between power and freedom. Foucault's theorization of the political realm was articulated in the context of the relationship he theorizes between power and freedom. Within my exposition of these key Foucauldian concepts, my aim was to draw out the complexity of Foucault's account of power. In Section Two, I will apply these Foucauldian insights within the applied context of a case study of power in Cabramatta. My aim in this next section is to further illuminate the ways in which power mediates lived experience from a purely Foucauldian perspective.

## **SECTION TWO: A FOUCAULDIAN ANALYSIS OF POWER IN CABRAMATTA**

### **Chapter Five: The Case of Cabramatta**

Cabramatta is a large Australian suburb in the local government area of Fairfield, New South Wales. It is a uniquely multicultural community with a strong history of migrant settlement since the end of the Second World War. Cabramatta in the 1990's was culturally diverse suburb with a high proportion of young people, as well as being an area that struggled with elevated levels of unemployment and lower household incomes (Legislative Council, 2001: 9). Cabramatta was also home to a large Indo-Chinese community<sup>12</sup>, of which the Vietnamese population formed the largest group (Cabramatta had the highest residential intensity of Fairfield's 19,000 strong Vietnamese population) (Viviani, 1996: 47-52).

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<sup>12</sup> I follow Nancy Viviani who uses the term Indo-Chinese to refer to "...Vietnamese, Chinese from Indochina, Cambodians, Laos and Hmong..." (Viviani, 1996: 3).

## BACKGROUND

The cultural diversity of Cabramatta and its history of migrant settlement are important background dimensions for my discussion of the issues experienced by the community. From a Foucauldian perspective, power is exercised and experienced within a social context that is always historically mediated. When considering the ways in which power mediated the socio-political spaces in Cabramatta, the history of Australian immigration policy and the development of multiculturalism in Australia are highly significant. Of particular relevance is the *White Australia Policy*, which was officially instituted under the umbrella of the 1901 *Immigration Restriction Act* and finally repealed in 1960 (Bird, 1995: 3). As an immigration policy, the aim to decrease and remove non-European people from Australia almost totally achieved its goals, however the *White Australia Policy* did more than regulate immigration; it constituted a British white Australia that also excluded the Aboriginal population (Jupp, 1998: 73-77).

The goals of the *White Australia Policy* were ones of ethnic homogeneity and assimilation, embodied within discriminatory policies against the Aboriginal population and non-European residents (Jupp, 1995: 208). The notion of *White Australia* was a racial ideology which, despite its abandonment, still embodied implications for later immigration debates (Jupp, 1998: 82). The negative political, social and economic issues associated with continuing support for the *White Australia Policy*, gained public prominence in the 1950's, with many opponents emerging from Australian Universities

(Jupp, 1995: 209). Also important for the eventual end of the White Australia Policy was the high number of migrants from non-English speaking European countries who came to Australia as part of migration programs after the end of the Second World War (Jupp, 1995: 209).

While policies concerning immigration earlier in the twentieth century aimed to support the idea of British Australia, re-settlement of displaced persons brought about important changes (Jupp, 1998: 134). Assimilation of new migrants to Australian culture embodied expectations that new arrivals would abandon their own languages and manner of dress to ensure that they would fit in with Australian culture and be less visible in their difference (Jupp, 1998: 134-135). While these expectations were not reflected in laws, social pressure was high and there remained a strong emphasis on the “British character of Australia” (Jupp, 1998: 135).

Further increases in immigration from non-English speaking European nations witnessed a shift in governmental policy approach from one of assimilation to one of multiculturalism (Jupp, 1995: 209). Multiculturalism as a social ideal came to prominence in the early 1970’s and while it has undergone various changes over time, the basic principles of recognition of diversity and promotion of equality has remained the same (Council of the Institute of Multicultural Affairs, 1986: 3). Long before the 1977 report from the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (*Australia as a Multicultural Society*) defined the notion of multiculturalism in the Fraser era the Whitlam labor government also played a role in its initial origins (Jupp, 2007: 85-86). Gough Whitlam and Don

Dunstan pushed for a multicultural program in the late 1960's, leading the charge for the Australian Labor Party to remove their support for the White Australia Policy; a move that led to the implementation of multicultural policies under the auspices of another early supporter, Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby (Jupp, 2007: 85-86: Bruer & Power, 1993: 111).<sup>13</sup>

A shift from the political rhetoric of mono-culturalism to a multicultural perspective was also apparent in the Australian Liberal Party's recognition of the possibilities for an emergent migrant vote after election losses of 1972 and 1974 (Cope, Castles, & Kalantzis 1991: 13). In 1973, Al Grassby, presented a paper titled *A Multi-Cultural Society for the Future*, within which he couched the term "Family of the Nation", a term which embodied the idea that aiming for a common good does not require an "artificial conformity" to sameness (Grassby, 1973: 3). The idea was that a commonality in shared commitment to the good of Australia was a sufficient bond to link a multiplicity of individuals who embodied many diverse lifestyles, activities, beliefs and cultural practices. (Grassby, 1973: 3).

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<sup>13</sup> I also acknowledge the importance of "immigration reformers" in the abolition of the *White Australia Policy*; a significant role discussed in a collection of essays presented in *The Abolition of the White Australia Policy: The Immigration Reform Movement Revisited*, (Viviani, (ed) 1992). See also Jayasuriya & Pookong (1999: 11).



At the end of 1975 there was a newly elected Liberal–National coalition government headed by Malcolm Fraser, heralding an era when multiculturalism as a policy was clearly promoted (Birowski, 2000: 465). The subsequent 1983 elected Labor government headed by Bob Hawke at first followed on with the policies and programs put in place with some changes in focus occurring later in the decade (Birowski, 2000: 466).<sup>14</sup>

## **DEBATES SURROUNDING MULTICULTURALISM**

The new multiculturalism that emerged within the conservative Liberal government of the late 1970's, with its emphasis on difference rather than disadvantage and multiple social divisions rather than on class divisions, tackled the problem of social cohesion through categorizing ethnic groups as homogenous entities (Cope, Castles & Kalantzis, 1991: 14). This allowed symbolic representation of group interests under the wider umbrella of the state and shifted some responsibility for group welfare onto leaders within ethnic communities themselves (Cope, Castles & Kalantzis, 1991: 14). This policy approach stressed the right to maintain cultural identity and resulted in a relocation of

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<sup>14</sup> See Birowski (2000) for a detailed discussion of the different stages and developments of Australian multicultural policies.

services for migrants from the domain of social welfare to more “ethnic specific” services (Cope, Castles & Kalantzis, 1991: 14).

Multiculturalism embraced two important dimensions: diversity (recognition of the value of many cultures and backgrounds of Australians) and equality (the fostering of equal opportunities) (Council of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, 1986: 2-3). Multiculturalism as a policy draws on the principles identified and outlined by the Galbally report, including support for the preservation of individual cultures, respect for cultural difference, equality and equity of access to services and programs and the promotion of self-reliance (Council of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, 1986: 2-3).

Despite the changes from policies of assimilation to ideals of multiculturalism in Australia, immigration policy remained a prominent and contested area. The end of the Vietnam War and the fall of Saigon in 1975 saw a number of Vietnamese refugees arrive by boat in Australia, prompting the development of a specific refugee policy by the Australian government of the time (Viviani, 1996: 7-8). The arrival of Vietnamese refugees after 1975 was a politically charged issue principally due to entrenched attitudes towards race, the politically divisive events in Vietnam and uncertainty surrounding the expected number of Vietnamese arrivals (Viviani, 1980: 1) However, by 1979, public attention had turned from issues surrounding the entry of Vietnamese refugees to Australia to concerns about the impact of Vietnamese settlement (Viviani, 1980: 36).

Viviani (1980: 41-42) argues that the generally welcoming attitude in Australia towards the entry of refugees in the 1970's had shifted to a more negative opinion supported by ungrounded perceptions concerning Vietnamese settlement. Particularly relevant was the emergence in the 1980's and 1990's of a discourse that was concerned with the levels of Asian immigration (Jayasuriya & Pookong, 1999: 74). The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's report (HREOC, 1991) recognized that the rise of Asian immigration at the end of the 1970's, increases to unemployment after the recession (1982-1983) and the publicity of the "Blainey debate", prompted an "immigration debate" that questioned Asian immigration levels of (HREOC, 1991: 172-173).

The Blainey debate refers to the contentious discussion raised by historian Geoffrey Blainey. This debate emerged during a time in Australia where there was a restructure of the manufacturing industry leading to rising unemployment, especially among the newly arrived Vietnamese refugees who had settled in suburbs like Cabramatta, with its cheaper housing prices, and lower paid employment opportunities (Caruthers, 2008: 104). In a speech to Rotarians in Warrnambool, Victoria in 1984, and in his publication *All for Australia* later that same year, Blainey laid out his objections to the developments to Australian immigration policy in two areas: the entry of refugees and migrants to Australia; and the bi-partisan policy of multiculturalism that grounds the framework of "ethnic affairs" policy for migrants (Collins, 1985: 47-48).

Jock Collins makes the point that the debate concerning Blainey's arguments was "...an animal of the media, carried into the lounge rooms of the nation." (Collins, 1985: 47). This had two important consequences for the status of Blainey's critique: it did not initially provide a full and organized account of his arguments; and the debate ensured that Blainey gained a national platform for his views (Collins, 1985: 47). With the publication of *All for Australia*, it was possible to undertake a more detailed critique of Blainey's position, a task taken up by Collins, who found it a "...dangerous polemic which places Blainey at the forefront of the New Conservatism in Australia..." (Collins, 1985: 55).

Although Blainey's views were resisted by some of his academic colleagues and both sides of politics, the concerns he raised about Indo-Chinese concentration in urban areas and the associations he made between concentration and the creation of "ghettoes", gave rise to a harmful public debate that stigmatized the Indo-Chinese community (Viviani, 1996: 40-41). According to Viviani, the fear associated with "the ghetto" in the context of Indo-Chinese settlement was related to more than previous episodes of historical racism, as it connected with concerns about social disadvantage and lack of social cohesion (Viviani, 1996: 40). These concerns rose to public prominence in 1984, with negative connections being made between Indo-Chinese settlement and ethnic concentration by Blainey and again in 1988, when Opposition leader John Howard canvassed the possibility of slowing down Asian immigration if elected (Viviani, 1996: 40-41).

Despite these issues and emerging debates, continued government backing for the notion of multiculturalism continued from 1973 through to 1996, with prime ministers, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating following Fraser and Whitlam in re-stating support for multicultural policy and institutions (Jupp, 1998: 139). There were some changes that emerged alongside the multicultural agenda of the Galbally era, with some reforms to areas of general disadvantage that also included non-English speaking migrants (Cope, Castles & Kalantzis, 1991: 14).

In a more global context, the 1990's witnessed a "growing skepticism" concerning multiculturalism in the Australian context (Jupp, 1998: 146). By the year 1994, an increasing tendency to link ethnic diversity to conflict in society existed in Australia, alongside an increasing Australian dependence upon Asian immigration (Collins, 1994: 28). The late 1990's also witnessed a new conservative Liberal government under Prime Minister John Howard, who remained critical of multiculturalism (Jupp, 1998: 147). While ethnic groups within Australia received cultural rights (in the sense of a recognized right to the preservation of one's culture of origin) as the reward for their struggles against cultural hegemony or dominance, their political, social and economic rights had yet to be realized (Viviani, 1996: 142).

The 1990's was also the era in Australian politics where Pauline Hanson made her speech that called for the abolition of multiculturalism (Hanson, 1996). Hanson's 1996 maiden parliamentary speech made reference to increases in Asian immigration, arguing that Australia was "in danger of being swamped by Asians" who fail to "assimilate" and

who “form ghettos” (Hanson, 1996: 1). Hanson’s views in this speech went against non-discriminatory immigration policy on the basis of protecting social cohesion; an argument that conflated two distinct dimensions of Asian immigration; issues of settlement and the principles of recruitment (Jayasuriya & Pookong, 1999: 3 & 16).

### **ISSUES OF DRUG RELATED CRIME IN CABRAMATTA**

Against the backdrop of these debates, the multicultural community of Cabramatta has been portrayed as “Asian ghetto” (Collins, 1994: 37) and referred to as “Vietnamatta” (Dunn, 1993: 228). Cabramatta remains home to a large Vietnamese community, yet despite the high level of visibility of Vietnamese businesses in the CBD, the suburb of Cabramatta is a suburb of ethnic and cultural diversity (Collins, 1994: 36-37). The “concentration” of Vietnamese born residents in Cabramatta can be explained by many factors, including the closeness of migrant centers, employment and housing opportunities, the existence of social support networks (community, government and associations) and business and shopping opportunities (Dunn, 1993: 236-239).

In congruence with other suburbs in Western and South Western Sydney, Cabramatta has a high proportion of young people; it also encompasses areas of disadvantage and problems with unemployment (Legislative Council, 2001: 7-8). During the 1990’s there were widespread problems with drug activity and drug related crime in

Cabramatta that gained extensive media coverage. In particular, the 1994 murder of Cabramatta politician John Newman at his home increased the intense public scrutiny of Cabramatta. High rates of crime and of unemployment, the visibility of street level drug dealing, and unique policing problems within Cabramatta were not discussed in isolation. As Collins argues, debates in the media situated notions of “Asian crime” within a wider context of issues associated with Australian multiculturalism (Collins, 1994: 27).

In the 1990’s, the overriding response to the crime and drug problems within Cabramatta was a campaign of “saturation policing” within the CBD to target street level drug activity (Dixon and Maher, 2005: 128-129). This included police operations such as Operation Puccini, which targeted drug related activity within the CBD (Legislative Council, 2001: 39). There were many complex effects associated with these policing efforts and in the domain of public health, there were some significantly detrimental outcomes. Maher and Dixon (1999) studied the effects of “police crackdowns” in Cabramatta’s street level drug market in the context of the relationship between law enforcement and harm minimization. In terms of policing directed primarily at drug users, many harms for public health were identified including; the nasal and oral storage and transfer of heroin (risk of disease, risk of choking and possibility of overdose through swallowing to avoid prosecution), failure to carry clean injecting equipment (use of unclean syringes and the possibility of blood borne diseases) and high risk injection behavior ( possibility of overdose and unsafe disposal of used syringes) (Maher & Dixon, 1999: 496-500).

Saturation policing efforts in the CBD also prompted displacement of the drug market, spreading the drug market into residential areas and into other areas of community life such as parks and areas around schools and homes (Maher & Dixon, 1999: 502-503). While Operation Puccini had a level of success in the reduction of street level drug activity, the subsequent displacement of dealing activity to “fortified drug houses” required modifications to policing strategies and practices that were not undertaken due to budgetary constraints and operational limitations (Legislative Council, 2001: 48).

Thus the dispersion and displacement of the drug market in Cabramatta clearly embodied consequences for the wider community and for drug users in terms of safety and quality of life. During 1999, the management of Local Area Command resources was further complicated by a performance measure known as the Crime Index (Legislative Council, 2001: 40). While the Index did not directly inform the allocation of resources to policing in Cabramatta, it did have an impact on the allocation of resources within Local Area Command (Legislative Council, 2001: 41) As a crime measuring database that only measured some types of crime such as robbery and car theft and left out other serious crimes like murder and drug dealing, the way it was used was problematic in a community like Cabramatta with a high level of drug related crime and violence (Legislative Council, 2001: 41-42).

The year 1999 also witnessed some positive steps taken to address the drug problems within Cabramatta. The NSW government instituted a drug summit that aimed



to comprehensively deal with the drug problems (Legislative Council, 2001: 98). This in turn led to the implementation of a program that focused on eleven key areas including early intervention and prevention strategies, education programs in schools, and treatment programs (Legislative Council, 2001: 98). Increasing public concern and the efforts, courage and persistence of members of the Cabramatta community prompted an Inquiry into policing in Cabramatta in 2000.<sup>15</sup> The inquiry began in December and its public nature gave the community an opportunity to provide submissions and present their own perspectives. The terms of reference of the inquiry were to examine the effectiveness of police resources in terms of drug related crime; to determine the impact of the crime index on policing within Cabramatta; and to analyze the efficacy of policing for addressing the problems experienced within the community, with specific reference to those from non-English speaking backgrounds (Legislative Council, 2001: 1).

On 27 March 2001, before the outcome of the inquiry was revealed, new legislation was announced to be put in place immediately, the outcome of which included

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<sup>15</sup> It is important to emphasize the role played by particular individuals, including community representatives, politicians, journalists, business owners and members of the school community, in advocating for the Cabramatta community and ensuring that the true depth of Cabramatta's problems and its effects on the community were brought to public attention. While I will not name these individuals here, the documentary *Once Upon a Time in Cabramatta* (Hickey, 2012) gives a detailed account of what led up to the Inquiry into Cabramatta Policing and of the contributions of particular individuals.

an increase in police powers including “drug house legislation”, where those identified as entering or leaving any premises identified as a “drug premises” could now be arrested and charged (Legislative Council, 2002: 7). In addition, the police would have the power to order any non-resident of Cabramatta who was suspected of being involved in drug activity to leave the area, under the umbrella of “move on powers” (Legislative Council, 2002: 7). Importantly there would be an increase of treatment places for drug rehabilitation (an extra 500 beds) and finally the capacity for Magistrates to impose a mandatory requirement for addicts to undertake treatment as part of their bail conditions (Legislative Council, 2002:14).

After the government package was implemented there was a further review of the enquiry released in September 2002. This examined the government’s implementation of the recommendations of the inquiry and it also examined the changes within police and community relations. While much was gained from the measures put in place after the Inquiry in terms of improvements to the everyday life of the Cabramatta community, history has shown that without constant maintenance of concerted efforts to address any ongoing issues with drugs, improvements can quickly be followed by a return of the same problems experienced before. (Legislative Council, 2002: 77).

There are many sides to Cabramatta and it is important to remember that it is not only renowned for the drug and crime experienced in its recent history, but also for its historic significance in the context of Australian immigration and multiculturalism, its cultural diversity, vibrant shopping centres and central business district, and as a

destination for food tourism and cosmopolitan dining experiences. According to Kevin Dunn:

Cabramatta is a symbolically contested landscape. On the one hand, Cabramatta is disparaged as a drug haven and disadvantaged ghetto. On the other hand, the suburb is a celebrated icon of Australia's cultural diversity (Dunn, 1998: 517-518)

In examining relations of power within Cabramatta, it is important to keep in mind the contested understandings of Cabramatta: what it meant to the community who lived there and how wider societal understandings informed and shaped the lived experience of the individuals who made Cabramatta their home. This brief historical background will provide the backdrop against which I will present my Foucauldian analysis of power in the following chapter. As I progress through my analysis, I will refer back to aspects of Cabramatta's history and to the significance of the debates on Australian multiculturalism.

## **Chapter Six: Foucauldian Power in Cabramatta**

The historical background of Australian immigration policy, the advent of multiculturalism in Australia and the debates associated with Indo-Chinese settlement in Australia after the Vietnam War were all significant influences upon some key events in Cabramatta that will form the content of my analysis. Before I begin, it is important to draw attention to a significant limitation of the scope of my discussion. While I recognize the significance of the historical and social context within which particular issues of drug related crime developed in Cabramatta, the focus of my analysis does not allow an exploration of the underlying causes and conditions of the events I will discuss. Of necessity, the scope of my discussion will be limited to the ways in which power was implicated in the social and political responses to drug related crime issues in Cabramatta in the 1990's.

The aim of my analysis is to illuminate the benefits and the limitations of a Foucauldian analysis of power in its capacity to provide a detailed account of the ways in which power mediated the lived experience of the Cabramatta community. Drawing from Foucault's insights on the constitutive role of power relations, I will examine the social and political responses to the drug related crime problems in Cabramatta. These responses will be articulated as relations of power that imposed a particular constrained reality on the lived experience of members of the community. Two specific dimensions

of these responses will be analyzed: the first is the social response to Cabramatta, represented by the way in which bodies of discourse, either intentionally or unintentionally, connected issues of drug related crime with race and ethnicity. The second aspect of my analysis will focus on the policing practices adopted as a political response to the increasing visibility of the street level drug activity in Cabramatta's central business district (CBD).

Through my Foucauldian inspired analysis, I will emphasize two key arguments; first, that Foucault's account of power provides a detailed account of the ways in which the power inherent to social practices in Cabramatta constituted constrained and harmful forms of subjectivity; second, that Foucault's account of resistance can illuminate the ways that relations of power in Cabramatta also enabled the constitution of alternative less constrained subjectivities. In the final Chapter of Section Two I will discuss the limitations of a Foucauldian analysis by outlining two possible arguments: first, that a purely Foucauldian analysis of power is limited in its capacity to make explicit moral distinctions between two distinct forms of resistance in Cabramatta; and second, that Foucault's emphasis on a politics of the self does not fully account for the political possibilities associated with the collective power of the Cabramatta community.

## **SOCIAL RESPONSES: POWER, DISCOURSE AND SUBJECTIVITY IN CABRAMATTA**

In the context of the social response to the crime and drug problems in Cabramatta, news print reporting and commentary can be articulated as discursive practices of power. From a Foucauldian perspective, media texts can be understood in terms of an “instrumental mode” of the exercise of power (Foucault, 2002: 344). This refers to the ways in which power is exercised throughout the social body, whether by discourse, supervision or observation, economic inequalities, use of force, social customs and rules (Foucault, 2002: 344). While power is ubiquitous in the social domain, it can be manifested in many different ways; taken up, changed, shaped and expressed in a variety of modes at a social and institutional level (Foucault, 2002: 345).

Following the murder of local politician and anti-drugs campaigner John Newman, newspaper commentary embodied two broadly contrasting discourses concerned with the crime and drug problems in Cabramatta<sup>16</sup>. One dialogue explicitly and implicitly connected the drug and crime problems with concerns about ethnicity and the issues associated with ethnic diversity and social cohesion. Another dialogue, less

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<sup>16</sup> As the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Sun-Herald* provided a comprehensive commentary of the events in Cabramatta on a daily basis, I confine my discussion to reporting and commentary within these publications. However, I recognise that there were other publications that covered these events extensively (*The Canberra Times* for example).

prominent but still apparent within the newspaper discourse, implicitly and explicitly argued against the association made between crime and ethnicity and discussed the drug and crime problems in the context of a broader societal issue.<sup>17</sup>

The presence of these contrasting discourses within media reporting of the events in Cabramatta can be situated within the context of what Foucault refers to as the “rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses”; a notion which recognizes that conflicting discourses constitute a space of instability and possibilities, both for power and for multiple resistances” (Foucault, 2008: 100). In this context, it is important to understand discourse not as a unified or stable dialectic that clearly distinguishes two opposing sides - the dominant and subverted or the acceptable and non-acceptable - but as many and varied “discursive elements” that are employed in a diversity of strategies (Foucault, 2008: 100).

As Foucault emphasizes, discourse produces and expresses power, while also undermining and exposing power; fostering the possibility of resistance to all relations of power, no matter how coercive or constraining they have become (Foucault, 2008: 100-101). In the context of Cabramatta, conflicting discourses opened up local spaces of

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<sup>17</sup> The commentary of *SMH* journalists Peter Smark (8 September 1994: 15) and Gerard Henderson (13 September, 1994: 13) provide examples of discourse that argued against the negative associations between race and crime made by some commentary in the media.

contestation where Cabramatta's problems could be articulated as complex and multi-dimensional issues with wider social and political implications.

As power circulates throughout society, relations of power are supported by a "net-like organization"; individuals are always within the grasp of a power that instantaneously enables and constrains them (Foucault, 1980: 98). While human beings can make an intentional decision to exercise power, the framework of power that is a result of multiple relations of power has an independent existence (Heller, 1996: 85). Power is that which enables one's actions to have an effect on the actions of others, or as Foucault puts it; "...a mode of action on actions" (Foucault, 2002: 343). What allows this modality of action upon action is the "The System of Differentiations"; that is the conditions of difference in the social domain, including status, economics, culture, skills and wealth and Foucault emphasizes that these differences can be both an effect of power relations and a condition for the exercise of power (Foucault, 2000: 344). As Heller argues, power for Foucault is a "medium of change" that can take many forms and have multiple effects within society (Heller, 1996: 83).

In articulating Foucauldian power as a mode of action on other actions and as a medium of change it is important to consider the differences within the social domain that both supported power relations in Cabramatta and that were an effect of the exercise of power. In the specific context of the newspaper reporting on the drug and crime issues in Cabramatta it is crucial to emphasize the significance of the wider historical, cultural and social framework within which power is exercised. From a Foucauldian perspective the



response to Cabramatta's issues are inextricably connected to the wider discursive practices and particular ways of interpreting and discussing cultural differences embodied within Australian multicultural society. This is important in the context of Cabramatta, as it was issues of crime and drug activity that informed the discourse that focused particularly on members of the "Asian population". Indeed, Collins emphasizes that the many references to the notion of "Asian crime" within media reporting can be situated within a wider debate about ethnicity, cultural diversity and social cohesion in multicultural Australia (Collins, 1994: 27).

Peter Teo analyzed the 1995 print media reporting of the activities of a Vietnamese gang in Cabramatta, using critical discourse analysis to identify a form of racism situated within a wider and more insidious structure of power discourse (Teo, 2000: 8). In exploring the way in which newspaper discourse applied an "ideological dominance" over Asian migrants in Australia, Teo was able to articulate how this discourse was embedded within a less visible discourse of power (Teo, 2000: 8). The ideological foundations for a form of racism that was both subtle and powerful in its capacity to operate within an egalitarian and democratic framework was investigated, supporting the argument that modern Australian society embodies a hidden racism supported by discursive strategies that "blame the victim" (Teo, 2000: 8).

Within this wider context, Teo's analysis demonstrated how newspaper reporting of the activities of a "Vietnamese" gang in Cabramatta, operated to legitimate and render acceptable the ideological dominance exerted over the Vietnamese community (Teo,

2000: 9). Constant references about Vietnamese gangs, particularly in association with drug activity in Cabramatta, constituted a generalization that masked the diversity and complexity of individuals within the Vietnamese community (Teo, 2000: 16-17). This form of generalization does not just affect the wider perceptions of otherness, but also shapes the way that society in general relates to and behaves towards those seen as different (Teo, 2000: 17).

Collins (1994) examined the issues surrounding Asian settlement in Australia. Collins argues that the very term “Asian” masks processes of labeling and generalization which underpin prejudice and which also inform discourse and debate about Asians within Australia (Collins, 1994: 30). It is acknowledged that the media reporting of events in Cabramatta were presented in particularly objectionable terms that identified the threats to wider Australian society posed by *Asian criminals*, or *Asian crime gangs*. (Collins, 1994: 30). An important point is that in portraying such a diverse group of people as culturally homogenous, a significant disservice is done to the widely varying cultures within a multicultural society and the diversity of birth places and varying immigration experiences that they embody (Collins, 1994: 31).

Collins’ insights intersect with the theme of generalization isolated by Teo’s analysis, which refers to “...the extension of the characteristics or activities of a specific and specifiable group of people to a much more general and open-ended set.” (Teo, 2000: 16). Teo makes the point that gang activities in Cabramatta were discussed in a way that moved towards an ever-expanding generalization; from the gang, to the Vietnamese

community and then to Asians in general (Teo, 2000: 23). It is argued that the continual and often immaterial references to the race (Asian or Vietnamese) of those responsible for criminal activity encouraged an association to be made between race and crime (Teo, 2000: 23).

Ultimately, the character of the news reporting of drug activity in Cabramatta, couched in terms of “Asian crime” and “Asian crime gangs” reveals an apparent homogenization of a culturally and ethnically heterogeneous group of people (Teo, 2000: 16).<sup>18</sup> My own review of newspaper texts published in the month of John Newman’s murder identified similar associations between race and crime.<sup>19</sup> One edition of *The Sun-Herald* for example included references to “Asian gangs”, “Asian youths” and “Asian related crime” (Warnock, 1994: 14) as well as “Indochinese crime menace” and “Indochinese gang lore” (Warneminde et al., 1994: 1).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> My analysis is mainly concerned with Sydney and state print media reporting. I confined my own search to *The Sydney Morning Herald* and its Sunday counterpart *The Sun-Herald*. I also looked at some reporting in *The Canberra Times*.

<sup>20</sup> By drawing attention to the use of these terms, I am not suggesting that the authors of the particular newspaper article were intentionally linking race and crime. However, in reporting on the events in Cabramatta these kinds of terms were often used by many commentators, and this not only supports Teo’s

Despite a lack of evidence for an ethnic basis for crime<sup>21</sup>, public attitudes are influenced by the kind of discourse that is represented within the mass media, especially those forms of media discourse that associate ethnicity with social conflict and crime (Collins, 1993: 24). The ideas presented by newspaper reports that make an implicit or explicit link between race and crime constitutes what Bird calls an “ethnic closure”; a phenomenon which normalizes the behavior of Anglo-Australians, while implying that non-English speaking background individuals (non-English speaking background youth in particular is emphasized here) undermine social cohesiveness (Bird, 1995: 6). Bird’s use of the term “ethnic closure” brings to mind the consideration of individuals or groups of individuals as “other” in the collective consciousness; the “other” who, through being associated with notions of crime, are considered a threat to the social body.

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findings, but also illustrates Teo’s point that these kinds of terms **in themselves** essentially associate race and crime.

<sup>21</sup> Collins’ analysis of social cohesion and cultural diversity in Australia and Canada examines the notion of social cohesion in the context of the indicators developed by Cope and his colleagues (1991), including inter-ethnic conflict, media representations and the extent of prejudice embodied within public attitudes (Collins. 1993:19). He notes that the rational basis for attitudes that make a link between ethnic diversity and crime, particularly in the context of Asian immigration and criminal activity, are refuted within Canadian research and have no evidentiary basis in the Australian research context (Collins, 1993: 20).

The representation of Vietnamese as criminals played a role in portraying the Vietnamese community in Cabramatta as representative of an internal threat to the Australian ideal of a socially cohesive society. The significance of this should not be underestimated. For Cabramatta's Vietnamese community, their portrayal as perpetrators of crime allowed the complexity of the causes of Cabramatta's crime problems to be ignored; issues of poverty and unemployment, as well as drug demand and supply factors, all contributed to the problems with crime in Cabramatta (Legislative Council, 2001: 5-12).

Foucault's account of the way in which power constitutes individuals recognizes that power objectifies human beings through providing particular identities that are accompanied by categorizations which are naturalized and normalized within society (Gordon, 1999: 400). In the case of Cabramatta, it is possible to recognize relations of power within the discourses that associated the identity of "Vietnamese" (and in a wider context the identity "Asian") with categorizations of criminality and drug related activity. The association of these categorizations to representations of identity in Cabramatta, constituted constrained forms of subjectivity; internalized and appropriated by the very people who were being oppressed by them. As Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself

the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles;  
he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault, 1995:  
202-203)

The visibility of the Cabramatta community was supported through extensive media coverage of John Newman's murder and of the drug related crime issues experienced in the Cabramatta CBD. For Foucault, the interiorization of the gaze of disciplinary society ensures that human bodies are controlled not through physical force, but through the shaping of self-understandings (Foucault, 1980: 155; Gordon, 2002: 129). In practical terms the ways in which we internalize the judgements of others impacts the way we live our lives and respond to the world. An example of this is the general feeling represented by witness statements within the Inquiry. The feeling expressed was one of frustration fueled by the injustice of being marginalized and weighed down with the tag of living in "Australia's drug Capital" (Legislative Council, 2001: 13-14). Indeed, the name Cabramatta, became a synonymous term for drugs and crime, a state of affairs that would surely have held negative consequences for self-understandings within the community. This was reflected in submissions made to the Inquiry, where it was revealed that the symbolism of Cabramatta shaped the way that members of the community interacted outside the community; in particular, being careful to not to reveal their place of residence as Cabramatta (Legislative Council, 2001: 5).

The inter-subjective character of human existence places particular limitations upon human beings who are always caught up within a particular social and historical context. Power relations constitute the subject as an object in the world via practices that divide the individual; separating the individual from others and partitioning aspects of self-understanding (Foucault, 2002: 326). Representations of Cabramatta that covered over cultural diversity and that consistently and clearly connected race and crime embodied relations of power that constituted divided subjects; divided from the wider population and divided within themselves. In intentionally or unintentionally implying a connection between race and crime, discursive practices constituted constrained and harmful subjectivities that limited the possibilities for action and freedom. In order to further illustrate the ways in which power shaped the subjective possibilities for the Cabramatta community, I will take a closer look at the ways in which Cabramatta's Vietnamese community were represented in public discourse. As the largest group of Indo-Chinese in Australia in the mid 1990's (estimates were approx. 151,000 by mid-1995) with the highest number living in the LGA of Fairfield (19,000 in 1991 census) (Viviani, 1996: 47-52), the Vietnamese community were subject to intense public scrutiny.

## CONSTRAINED SUBJECTIVITIES IN CABRAMATTA

“Names hurt hearts and minds and souls, and a ‘me’ truly never hurt by names would be impervious to other human beings - an angel or sociopath perhaps” (Morris, 2006: 205).

From a Foucauldian perspective the general characteristics of ethnicity can constitute a form of stereotype when a necessary relation is attributed to a diversity of individuals. These points are elaborated in *The History of Sexuality*, when Foucault emphasizes the powerful effects of an artificial association of a group of diverse characteristics within one general category (Foucault, 2008: 154). This is embodied within the notion of a “fictitious unity” or the attribution of a wide variety of distinct characteristics to an all-encompassing and apparently universal concept (Gordon, 2002: 129). For Foucault there are no fixed essence or universal human nature, thus our discursive practices do not obscure or hide a true reality; they are a reflection of a particular arrangement of power in society (Gordon, 2002: 128-129). Thus it is not that the “fictitious unity” or generalization masks a true nature of essence, it just works to control diversity and manage a multiplicity – in other words, the attribution of a “fictitious unity” is an expression of power and a technique of social control (Gordon, 2002: 129).



The Vietnamese are far from a homogeneous group, embodying many internal differences concerned with ethnicity (ethnic Chinese or ethnic Vietnamese), gender, class and religion (Dunn, 1993: 230; Viviani, 1984: 2). In the case of the Vietnamese community in Cabramatta, there were two ways in which the attribution of a fictitious unity, worked to exert social control and to constitute constrained forms of subjectivity. The first involves a necessary relation being attributed between an individual's actions and their ethnicity. According to Teo, the continual repetition of the artificial association of Vietnamese or Asian with crime had the consequence of rendering these terms identical, thus reflecting a particularly powerful form of stereotyping (Teo, 2000: 23).

In the context of some of the print media reporting of the events in Cabramatta, the term "Vietnamese" was used as a way of describing individual characteristics *as well* as signifying an ethnic group. So while a person who could be described as Vietnamese may have committed a crime, in referring to "Vietnamese crime", it is possible to imply an association between Vietnamese (understood as ethnicity) and crime.<sup>22</sup> The following terms are taken from a news text and illustrate this point; "Vietnamese crime groups", "Vietnamese organized crime" and "Vietnamese crime gangs", (Fitzpatrick, 1994: 17).

In the discourse concerning the issues of crime and drugs in Cabramatta, individuals from diverse cultures and places of origin were artificially grouped together

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<sup>22</sup> Thank you to Dr Kim Atkins for emphasising the subtlety of this point to me.

and represented as homogenous. Foucault argues that the unification of a diverse set of characteristics makes it simpler to develop an associated body of knowledge and thus to have access to a set of scientific norms against which to make judgements about normality/abnormality (Foucault, 2008: 154-155). According to Foucault, the grouping of diverse categories together under the concept of “sex” for example, allowed utilization of sex as a “causal principle” or as a signifier of something universal (Foucault, 2008: 154). This powerful signification is one that every individual must take on board in order to gain self-understanding (Foucault, 2008: 155-156).

For Foucault power is supported by visibility in the sense that the internalization of the norms of modern forms of power relations requires the visibility of social practices (Gordon, 2002: 132). We take up particular roles that are available to us in the communities and societies in which we live and social control requires the visibility of discursive practices and the potential visibility of the subjects who take them up (Gordon, 2002: 132). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault emphasizes that there are two ways of exercising power over human beings: to exercise control over their relationships to ensure a particular kind of community; and to separate what he calls their ‘dangerous mixtures’ to ensure a disciplined society (Foucault, 1995: 198). This is achieved through branding and through surveillance (Foucault, 1995: 198). Power is manifested anonymously through a particular distribution of bodies and surveilling gazes and individuals are implicated through their awareness of their visibility (Foucault, 1995: 202).

In the case of the Cabramatta, the kind of visibility that was constituted through a form of discourse that associated race with crime, subjected members of the community to relations of power that were highly constraining in terms of self-understanding. The self-understandings available to Cabramatta community (particularly the Vietnamese community) were shaped by the powerful discourses that intentionally or unintentionally worked to “brand” individuals and separate them from wider society. For Foucault, relations of power are always implicated in the constitution of our individual identity through subjugation; the ways in which we are subject to the control of others and the way in which we are tied to our own identities by self-knowledge (Foucault, 2002: 331). As Foucault argues, it is not that power relations repress or change “...the beautiful totality of the individual...”, but that that power is implicated in our individuality, making us implicit in our own subjection (Foucault, 1995: 217).

While ethnicity operates as a manifest sign of difference, it is also intertwined with power and identity in Australia: the attribution of ethnicity ensures a separation between the dominant group and those on the margins (Viviani, 1996: 114-115). This is significant from a Foucauldian point of view, in that the notion of race plays an integral role in terms of marking differences within the field of biopower and bio-political government. Specifically, Foucault’s account focuses attention on the role of modern power in justifying the exclusion of particular individuals or groups within society (Foucault, 2003a: 255-257). The 1991 *National Enquiry into Racist Violence in Australia*

suggests that those prejudiced against Asian-Australians or the perpetrators of racist violence appeared to disregard the importance of ethnic distinctions such that:

When specific groups of Asians are the focus of hostile attention, there is an assumption that all Asians belong to that group. Thus, when the issue of Vietnamese refugees was controversial, Asians generally tended to be identified as Vietnamese. (HREOC, 1991:141)

This is significant in the context of social control and the ways in which the imposition of an artificial unity on a complex multiplicity supports relations of power. Societal, political and cultural institutions mirror wider forces within societies and social control is engendered through the constitution of a fictitious unity, by subjectifying individuals who must relate to social practices and discourse to constitute their own self-understanding (Gordon, 2002: 128-129). While disciplinary power appears all encompassing, it is important to remember that for Foucault, power is dependent upon freedom and relations of power are necessarily accompanied by resistance, which can take the form of questioning and contestation. In Cabramatta, there were many local efforts to resist and refuse the association between race and criminality. Members of the wider public wrote letters and opinion pieces that were published in the newspapers and

there were media commentators and journalists who resisted making the connection between race and crime in their commentary and reporting on Cabramatta.

Foucault emphasizes the potential for individual contestation, refusal, revolt, and localized resistances, acknowledging that local contestations can produce divisions in society that break up hegemonic unities and unified subjectivities to promote new possibilities (Foucault, 2008: 96). As Foucault states:

We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy.

Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault, 2008:101)

In examining the way that power worked in Cabramatta through a Foucauldian lens, it is possible not only to uncover the constraining effects of the power exercised through discourse, but also its more enabling effects.

Along these lines, it is important to emphasize that while discourse can be a vehicle for power, it can also form an obstruction or resistance to power, thus providing a

possible foundation for the beginnings of a new strategy (Foucault, 2008: 100-101).

Foucault states:

...we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. (Foucault, 2008: 100)

While counter-discourse is a powerful form of resistance and contestation, individual embodiment can also play this role. This is significant in terms of power's hold over the body as an individual entity and as a member of the population, because for Foucault, the social body as a whole is constituted by the way in which power operates on individual bodies (Foucault, 1980: 55). Power controls bodies via the forms of knowledge that are exercised on and over individuals, as Elizabeth Grosz argues; "Discourses, made possible and exploited by power, intermesh with bodies, with the lives and behavior of individuals, to constitute them as particular bodies." (Grosz, 1994: 150). This productive function of power in the constitution of individual bodies is at the forefront of Mandy Thomas's ethnographic study of Vietnamese migrant embodiment and the way in which dominant media representations of Vietnamese bodies as corrupt, has maintained practices of exclusions and disassociation that has affected lived

experience (Thomas, 1998: 74). The media portrayal of Vietnamese in public spaces as an urban problem of social disorder, the implication that they belong in the private or family domain and the representation of young Vietnamese males in terms of gangs, drugs and criminality, perpetuated the displacement and separation of the Vietnamese community from wider Australian society (Thomas, 1998: 85).

However, Thomas discovered that while some Vietnamese experience public bodies as constraining, in the sense of the meaning conveyed by their bodies in public space, some also recognized the transgressive possibilities of their bodies, occupying public space as a form of contestation and resistance and drawing attention to the subversive potential of Vietnamese embodiment (Thomas, 1998: 86). This study revealed that some young Vietnamese used their public selves to ground their own power through playing upon the fears of mainstream society; going out in groups and drawing attention to their physical presence in public spaces; acts of resistance that constitute novel ways of belonging (Thomas, 1998: 86).

While Foucault rejects the notion of autonomy in the sense that he does not accept that we could question truth, power and knowledge from the perspective of a human nature outside the domain of power, he embraces agency when he argues that we can constitute ourselves through actively fashioning a relationship to the truths made available to us by society (Bevir, 1999: 76-77). Our possibilities for action are shaped by our social situatedness in that we take up the roles available to us, expressing our agency via the discursive practices through which we relate to the world. Judith Butler's concept

of performativity as a mode of power is relevant here in the sense that it emphasizes that whatever is discursively created goes on to underpin the possibility of further actions (Butler, 2011: 139). For Butler, an individual's acts and gestures are expressive not of an identity or essence, but of a *fabrication*, produced through signs and discursive practices (Butler, 2006: 185). Butler argues that; "The normative force of performativity- its power to establish what qualifies as being- works not only through reiteration, but through exclusion as well" (Butler, 2011: 140).

These ideas are important for Foucault's arguments concerning power's constitutive role in subjectivity and the powerful effects of discursive practices for shaping lived experience. As previously discussed in Chapter One, individuals internalize the gaze of others, becoming simultaneously an object of power and subject to the identity to which they are tied. As Butler puts it in the context of gender, "...if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse..." (Butler, 2006: 185). While power constitutes subjects who are tied to a particular identity through true discourses, Foucault argues that subjects also constitute themselves through revealing the truth of a self that is created by relations of power (Foucault, 1996: 360-361). A creative work on the self requires us to re-situate ourselves in terms of our relationship to truth so that we can remove our own complicity in supporting and furthering the forms of harmful social control, as Foucault states; "Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power." (Foucault, 1980: 131). For Foucault



it is through relating to these truths in a different way that we are able to resist the imposition of subjectivities that are constraining.

This is important in the context of the Cabramatta case study because despite the negative stereotypes associated with Cabramatta, there were possibilities open to create alternative narratives. One important example is the *Tune in to Fairfield Multicultural Driving Tour*, which emerged from a cultural research project by Tania Dreher in association with the Centre for Cultural Research at the University of Western Sydney, the Fairfield City Council and the Migration Heritage Centre of the NSW Government (Dreher, 2006: 90). The project (2000-2001) was a direct response to the negative media characterization of Cabramatta as “Australia’s heroin capital”, and to the restricted cultural representations of the Fairfield area (Dreher, 2006: 94).

As a local government intervention into the “politics of representation” the project aimed to provide an alternative narrative of Cabramatta and Fairfield and importantly about multiculturalism, shifting away from otherness by promoting communication within diversity (Dreher, 2006: 97).<sup>23</sup> The significance of this project can be articulated in terms of what Charles Scott refers to in terms of the constitution or emergence of

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<sup>23</sup> The project experienced some issues which Dreher has articulated as limitations, including problems with ensuring full community participation, the possibility of re-enforcing dominant cultural representations or replacing one stereotype with another and the role of ethnic leaders as representative of the wider community (Dreher, 2006: 93)

political subjects: subjects who are not individuals as such, but groups of people, institutions, forms of knowledge and practices (Scott, 2010: 31). Scott emphasizes that Foucault's writing figuratively propelled groups of people and the power that shaped them into a public forum in ways that were sometimes unexpected, confronting and startling (Scott, 2010: 32). Political subjects are constituted through the interruptions to what is familiar and their exposure and prominence illuminate particular boundaries, illuminate the limits of our experience and remind us that we are thinking beings (Scott, 2010: 32-33).

The alternative narrative of the Cabramatta community can be understood as a Foucauldian political subject in this sense. In taking up the representations of "otherness" in Cabramatta and in transforming what this could mean for future representations of Cabramatta (the exotic and different), of discursive practices that shaped the self-understandings of the Cabramatta community were open to transformation. Indeed, Dunn argues for the value of "symbolically contested" areas such as Cabramatta, advocating a "politics of difference" approach to inform policy debates about cultural diversity and multiculturalism (Dunn, 1998: 523).

From a Foucauldian perspective, it is possible to understand how powerful discourses shape lives through establishing the context for the development of self-understandings. In recognizing the role of power in the constitution of our subjectivity, it becomes possible to question and contest the necessity of our self-understandings and create new ways of relating to the truths of our society. In this way powerful forms of

social control can be contested. Foucault emphasizes that the ways in which our understandings of particular practices, rationalities and truths shapes our understandings of ourselves and the ways in which we detach ourselves from these understandings to think differently are both informed by the way we experience the world (Foucault, 2002: 244). Our experience is our own, yet our subjective experiences are mediated by inter-subjectivity - others may have this experience and this experience also concerns other human beings who share the world with us (Foucault, 2002: 245). From a Foucauldian perspective, we can gain an understanding of how the discursive practices that constituted constrained forms of subjectivity for the Cabramatta community also contained the beginnings of new forms of political subjectivity.

## **THE POLITICS OF POLICING IN CABRAMATTA**

Relations of power and social control can also be explored in the context of the policing response to the drug and crime issues in Cabramatta. As a dimension of the wider concept of social control, policing does not embody the full range of practices of social control and neither does it exhaust all the processes of maintaining social order; normalization and punishment also play a significant role (Reiner, 2010: 4-5). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault speaks of policing as a disciplinary institution; encompassing everything of concern to society, or “the dust” of events as Foucault refers

to them (Foucault, 1995: 213-214). The later coordination of disciplinary power and biopower further supported the consolidation of power in the finest details of human life (Foucault, 2008: 139-141).

In the following discussion, I will examine the policing responses to the drug and crime issues that plagued Cabramatta during the 1990's through the lens of Foucault's analysis of power as governmentality. The aim of this discussion is to further illuminate the effects of power on the lived experience of the Cabramatta community through articulating the complexity of the relationship between power and freedom in governmental space. My analysis will emphasize the effects of failures of policing strategies on the wider community and the possibilities for freedom constituted by relations of power.

## **THE POLICY OF CONTAINMENT**

Throughout the 1980's and 1990's there were changes in policing policy in terms of addressing the crime and drug problems in Cabramatta. A policy of containment replaced the model of professional policing that dominated in the middle of the twentieth century: a model that had embodied fast response to crimes through radio communication, random and beat-type patrols by uniform police and investigative work after the crime had been committed occurred (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 127). The 2001 Inquiry into Policing noted reference to the "containment argument" associated with

community perceptions about the relationship between the continuing failure to resolve Cabramatta's drug and crime problems and the high level of community members with a non-English speaking background (Legislative Council, 2001: 13, 3.8).<sup>24</sup>

A series of American and English studies suggested the in- effectiveness of this type of policing response, which led to a rethinking of policing practice in general and which contributed to a "distinct modesty" in the NSW police concerning their capacity to transform the heroin market in Cabramatta (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 127). The notion of containment brings to mind the suppression or control of a particular phenomenon within a demarcated space. When referring to policing policy, the notion of containment speaks to a sense of limitation of the effectiveness of crime control efforts (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 126).

The policy of containment is premised upon the notion that police work has a limited impact on crime<sup>25</sup>. Quick police response times and police vehicle and foot patrols failed to make a significant impact on the crime and drug problems in Cabramatta

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<sup>24</sup> It is important to note that when discussing the failures of the Crime Index as a management tool later in the Inquiry, it is stated that the Inquiry did not believe that a policy of containment was intentionally pursued in Cabramatta but that the widespread belief that this was the case is important in terms of a lack of trust and communication between the community and police in Cabramatta (Legislative Council, 2001:80).

<sup>25</sup> See Maher & Dixon (2005: 127) & Reiner (2010) for a summary of the studies supporting this perception.

and combined with developing notions of the importance of social and economic forces on crime rates, this supported an attitude of trying to merely limit the damage (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 127). The containment policy responded to the perception that the Cabramatta drug market was an unfixable problem that could only be managed through localization and containment (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 128). Dixon and Maher's ethnographic research showed that many NSW police officers recognized that the constitutive effects of wider social and economic forces on crime problems placed the outcomes of policing activity outside their immediate realm of control (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 127-128).

There is a political character to drug legislation in the context of the ways it can be used as a resource for ensuring and enforcing public order and it is important to recognize that Police are directed in their duties by the organizations of which they are a part (Maher & Dixon, 1999: 492). As Reiner notes however, the laws overseeing how policing is practiced allow some discretion (Reiner, 2010: 117) and while there is common ground in terms of the requirements of policing in liberal democracies there are variations in how these requirements are interpreted (Reiner, 2010: 137). Policing is situated within a wider social, historical and political context. This is apparent in the context of Australian government initiatives in the 1980's, where a national campaign against drug abuse was associated with a push to increase policing capacities (Bennett, 2008: 316). According to Bennett, there were political aspects to these initiatives in that the Labor government of the time could effectively reveal its commitment to "law and

order” while also engaging in “softer” initiatives like education and treatment options; initiatives more closely aligned to labor values (Bennett, 2008: 316).

An important point made by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* concerns the way in which policing was able to respond not only to the commands from above, but also to appeals from below, that is, demands from the social body itself (Foucault, 1995: 214). The apparatus of the police is identified closely with disciplinary society while also being the “secular arm of the judiciary”, thus as an instrument of the state, policing can ensure an “...infinitesimal distribution of the power relations.” (Foucault, 1995: 216).

Thus, from a Foucauldian perspective, policing has an important role in increasing the possibilities for control at the level of everyday social relations that are revealed more fully through disciplinary techniques. In the context of Cabramatta’s drug market, the buying and selling of drugs contributed to social disorder through the possibility of violence associated with drug abuse, the fear instilled in the rest of the community who witnessed drug exchanges and the perceptions concerning the pollution or contamination of public spaces (Maher & Dixon, 2005: 491).

There is also the connection between drug activity and organized crime, a connection that was entrenched enough for the justification of a governmental response to crime and corruption in 1980’s Australia; the national campaign against drug abuse (NCADA, 1984-1985) focused on the issue of drug abuse rather than against drug trafficking as such (Bennett, 2008: 316.) This response accepted the notion that demand for drugs prompted the supply of drugs, which in turn encouraged crime and corruption;

an understanding that Bennett argues was one-dimensional and did not recognize wider contributing factors (Bennett, 2008: 316).

Of course, the matter of everyday life in the community was not something that could be easily disassociated from the realities of the crime and drug problems in Cabramatta. Submissions to the Inquiry stressed the limitations placed upon the everyday experience of families who could not let their children play in parks or walk to school on their own because of safety concerns. (Legislative Council, 2001:10). Policing to limit the damage could not address community concerns about the risks to safety in everyday life, nor the symbolic effects of Cabramatta being discussed in terms of being the “drug capital of Australia”. It was the failures associated with containment that led to a different approach to the drug problems, where the aim was one of displacement and dispersal (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 130).

## **QUALITY OF LIFE POLICING AND THE INSTIGATION OF OPERATION PUCCINI**

In 1997, new policing strategies strongly influenced by developments in the USA known as *quality of life* policing were introduced, extending the previous aims of limiting the damage towards improving everyday life in the Cabramatta CBD (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 128). Quality of life policing is associated with what has been termed the “broken windows theory” which embodies the idea that if minor crimes and disorders are not



addressed early, they can lead to more serious forms of lawlessness (Waddington, 2007: 135). The concept of the broken windows thesis was first introduced by Catherine Coles and George Kelling, who employed the metaphor to describe the way that communities could decline into disorder and crime if their maintenance is neglected (cited in Kelling & Coles, 1996: xv) The idea is that one broken window left unrepaired will lead to further broken windows, thus describing the risks to public spaces from isolated incidents that are allowed to go unchecked (Kelling & Coles, 1996: xv) Thus quality of life policing is a strategy of addressing visible crime and disorder problems through such practices as saturation policing and increased stop and search powers (Waddington, 2007: 135).

An explicit strategy of policing in Cabramatta known as “Operation Puccini” was introduced. Beginning in 1997, Operation Puccini involved 12 separate stages that all had the aim of targeting drug use, drug dealing and other criminal activity in the central business district of Cabramatta (Legislative Council, 2001: 39). While Puccini made a visible impact on street level drug activity in the CBD, drug related activity was not stamped out but merely displaced to the residential areas (Legislative Council, 2001: 48). Due to increasing budget cuts to Puccini and the higher costs associated with policing more dispersed and less centralized drug activity (Legislative Council, 2001: 48), improvements to the CBD came at a substantial cost to Cabramatta’s private spaces. Puccini included increased stop and search powers which, in association with the installation of CCTV cameras in the CBD, combined saturation policing with

surveillance to enact a more pro-active approach to street level drug dealing in Cabramatta (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 129).

Operation Puccini increased the visibility of uniformed police in the central business district of Cabramatta (an average of twenty extra police were provided to the Local Area Command in order to address the drug and crime activity and eradicate it from the business district (Legislative Council, 2001: 39). The notion of quality of life policing is partly subjective in that it not only embodies material changes to the state of affairs but can also embody perceived changes due to issues of visibility (Dixon and Maher, 2005: 129). The fact that one's subjective experience of walking through Cabramatta CBD before Operation Puccini was different to what it became after this strategy, was due to the high visibility of drug activity before this strategy of saturation policing was adopted. Displacement of the drug market was the first aim of quality of life policing and reduction took second place (Dixon and Maher, 2005: 129-130). Operation Puccini as a policy of displacement, aimed to decentralize the drug problem, to disperse it over a wider area and therefore make its effects more equitable and its policing more manageable (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 130).

From a Foucauldian perspective, the policing strategies employed within Cabramatta can be understood as part of a wider bio-political response to the social issues associated with drug related activity. Bio-politics is concerned with mass man and all the dangers and possibilities associated with processes that arise when human beings are considered in terms of their membership of a population (Foucault, 2003b: 242-243).

According to Foucault, bio-politics' final frontier is the control and management of human relationships and the human environment, both natural and artificial (Foucault, 2003b: 245). Thus bio-political interventions enter into the domain of artificial urban environments, to ensure optimum societal functioning through increasing the stability and regularity of processes within the general population (Foucault, 2003b: 245-246).

Street level drugs policing in its attempts to disrupt and disperse the drug market through intensive policing operations can be considered under the umbrella of biopolitical strategy within a space of governmentality. This approach is adopted by Carey Bennett, who theorizes the drug problem as a product of the “dialectical interplay between mutually constitutive forces”; that is the relationship between power and resistance (Bennett, 2010: 129). Attempts to police drug activity are shaped by the initial problem to be addressed, while also being mediated by the resistance constituted by the problem, a phenomena evidenced by the dispersion of street level drug dealing through policing strategies that must subsequently deal with the effects of drug displacement and the more systematic organization of higher level drug dealers (Bennett, 2010: 129). Bennett notes that supply-reduction strategies tend to produce intensive resistance which then requires tougher controls, which deepens and increases resistance even further (Bennett, 2010: 130).

There were significant implications for the residential areas when the drug activity was displaced outwards away from the CBD, encroaching upon residential neighborhoods and leading to issues with safety and security of the community. The

implications for drug users were also significant, particularly in terms of health and safety. Maher and Dixon (1999) found that one of the significant effects of intensive policing strategies was that drug users engaged in riskier behavior in terms of their own health and the health and wellbeing of members of the community. To avoid being apprehended drug users would inject in private, less private and completely public places, including vacant houses, parks, residential stairwells and back gardens, trains and public toilets (Maher and Dixon, 1999: 501).

Maher and Dixon's study focus on the health risks associated with drug displacement including the dangers of used syringes to members of the community, the increased likelihood of user overdose due to seclusion and the disconnect between users and health professionals and outreach workers (Maher & Dixon, 1999: 503). One potentially harmful practice was the nasal and oral storage and transfer of heroin which held risks for the spread of diseases through bodily fluid transmission (Maher & Dixon, 1999: 496). There was also found to be an increased fear about carrying injection equipment, resulting in the sharing of used syringes and the increased risks associated with HIV, Hepatitis and other blood borne diseases (Maher & Dixon, 1999: 497-498).

High risk injection behavior was also observed from pressure to inject quickly before detection, the disposal of used syringes in an unsafe way and increased carelessness in the preparation of injections which increased the risk of overdose (Maher & Dixon, 1999: 499-501). These kinds of adaptation, understood as acts of resistance in response to the increased police presence in Cabramatta CBD, support Bennett's

argument concerning the mutually constitutive relationship between power and resistance. As the constraints on drug activity became more pronounced, the market resisted and adapted, leading to further constraints to control the consequences and so on.

There are many dangers associated with some acts of resistance and this is particularly salient in the case of drug market displacement in Cabramatta. When drug activity was dispersed from the CBD, the market extended into private residential areas, where there were increased risks associated with discarded used syringes, drug overdoses that were harder to detect and a decreased access to outreach programs (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 501-503). The risks to health and life associated with these acts of resistance were dangerous for the individuals concerned and for the wider public. The Inquiry into Policing found that the way crime was structured in Cabramatta was partly constituted by the drugs policing strategies adopted, noting that there was a marked capacity for those involved in the drug trade to accommodate the changes in drugs policing and alter their behavior accordingly (Legislative Council, 2001: 24).

## **THE CRIMES INDEX**

Embodied within reforms to management of the police service, “Operations and Crime Reviews” were conducted on a continual basis, allowing senior management to appraise the performance of Local Area Commanders (LAC) (Legislative Council, 2001:

40). In aiming to measure the progress of LAC's in the context of crime reduction and to compare these measures across socio-economic context's (wealthy low-crime suburbs against disadvantaged high-crime areas) a measurement tool was sought that could provide a comparison of relative progress (Legislative Council, 2001: 40).

The Crimes Index was a measurement instrument to assess the performance of Local Area Commanders and was intended to promote comparisons between areas concerning the success of crime management across five domains of reported crimes, specifically; assault, break enter and steal, vehicle theft, robbery and stealing (Legislative Council, 2001: 40-41). The Index measured crimes reported to police and was intended to measure the performance of police and to help with decisions about resourcing; it was not meant to reveal a complete account of the multiplicity of crimes and criminal activities that happen in a particular area (Legislative Council, 2001: 42).

The Inquiry into Policing in Cabramatta found that the crime index as a stand-alone management tool had harmful effects for the Cabramatta community in terms of the way in which policing resources were managed and in its utilization as a 'public-relations tool' (Legislative Council, 2001: 77). It was found that the Crime Index had a role in the breakdown of trust between the community and the police; a state of affairs intensified by the way in which the Index was used to endorse the success of policing in Cabramatta, while the community still continued to experience high levels of crime and violence on the streets (Legislative Council, 2001: 77). Interestingly, the Inquiry also noted that the media, together with local businesses and community groups, played an important role in

bringing to light the questionable use of the Crime Index as a public relations tool (Legislative Council, 2001: 79).

What was most important from the perspective of the Cabramatta community was that the use of the crime index as a management tool on its own (without any other tool that measured the crimes not covered in the index), meant that it was irrelevant to the most important crimes taking place in Cabramatta (Legislative Council, 2001: 43). Serious crimes such as murder and drug offences were not considered within the index because of the way in which the index measured police activity rather than the incidence of crime (Legislative Council, 2001: 41; Dixon & Maher, 2005: 131). While murder was not included on the Index because it was considered relatively uncommon, drug arrests were seen as a direct result of policing endeavors rather than a gauge of police activity (Dixon & Maher, 2005: 131). Concerns about meeting the performance indicators associated with the crime index as a management tool meant that resources were redirected or misdirected into solving the kinds of crimes measured by the index at the expense of drug related offences (Legislative Council, 2001: 43-44; Dixon & Maher, 2005:131). As stated in the Inquiry:

Significant harm was caused to policing in Cabramatta because of the way the Crimes Index was used in the allocation of resources by management within the Cabramatta LAC in the period for which the Index was operating. The priority in

allocation of tasks and resources within the station became based around improving the Command's performance in Crime Index category offences, rather than the area's number one problem, drug crime. (Legislative Council, 2001: 43-44)

While reassurance was given that the streets were safer than before and that instances of crime were decreasing, the experience of the community was that drug activity and violent crimes were at totally unacceptable levels (Legislative Council, 2001:78). The dissonance between the representations of the value of the crime index and the experience of the wider public found expression within media and public discourse that contested the implications of the crime index (Legislative Council, 2001: 78). The subsequent failure of the crime index as a policing strategy had far ranging consequences. The community lost trust in the police force to protect them and respond to their significant crime problems and the fallout from the failure of the strategy created a great deal of conflict within the command of the Police force, with many changes in command, transfers and position terminations (Maher & Dixon, 1999: 132; Legislative Council, 2001: 77-80). At a time when drug dealing was high and serious offences such as murder and kidnap were frequent events, the efforts to promote the success of crime reduction in Cabramatta did not reflect the experience of the community (Legislative Council, 2001: 42).



The issues that emerged from the use of the crime index add another dimension to the story of Cabramatta. The following quotation is taken from the conclusion of the Inquiry:

This inquiry is in part a story of a community that fought back. It is about a community that refused to accept that nothing could be done, a community that, when told its streets were safe, fought back to make sure the Police, the Government, the Parliament and this Committee got to know their true story. Residents, business owners, local police and Community organisations have used the democratic process, through this Parliamentary Inquiry, the media and other forums, to make their voice heard. Their struggle is far from over, but no one is going to take the people of Cabramatta for granted again. (Legislative Council, 2001: 176)

From a Foucauldian perspective of power, what is most important is that relations of power in Cabramatta, however constraining, also constituted possibilities for resistance and freedom. Within a social space of power relations that had many negative effects, the Cabramatta community found the capacity to question the relations of power that had become part of their self-understandings; a capacity which can be understood in terms of the particular sense of autonomy recognized by Allen (2011) discussed earlier in my

thesis. Allen's reflections on the role of autonomy in Foucault's work pointed out that autonomy involves a recognition of the constitutive role of power/knowledge and of the possibilities for self-constitution through resistance to power/knowledge (Allen, 2011: 44-45).

While power constitutes subjects who have the capacity to resist, the success or failure of attempts to resist are dependent on a historical and situational context and an individuals' determination to create a new form of subjectivity by engaging with the limits that have shaped them (Simons, 1995: 4). By refusing to see their situation as necessary and by questioning the socio-political responses to the crime and drug problems in their community, individuals took up the responsibility as ontologically free beings and gave this freedom a material expression. As Diana Taylor argues, the refusal of that which appears necessary within lived experience requires that we understand that the ways of thinking about lived experience are contestable, and that when we recognise the contingent nature of our identity, we can refuse and contest what we have become (Taylor, 2011: 184-185). From a Foucauldian perspective refusal and contestation represents practices of self-constitution where an individual's relationship to truth is questioned and re-fashioned, by defining new "games of truth" (Foucault, 1997a: 295-298).

The transformation of the Cabramatta community can be articulated from a Foucauldian perspective in the context of the account of freedom that underpins Foucault's account of power. As Gordon argues, Foucault's later ethical work recognizes

freedom as the condition for the possibility of power, in that power only acts upon free human beings who have many possibilities for action (Gordon, 1999: 406). Actualized freedom is always subject to many constraints, yet as an ethos adopted and actively practiced, it can transform human lived experience in positive ways.

For Foucault freedom is not a principle or ideal state but a concrete and material possibility, with its foundations in the human capacity to resist, refuse and question their social situatedness (Grumley, 1998: 61). John Grumley refers to Foucault's notion of freedom as "freedom without ideology", noting that Foucault places the responsibility for freedom into the hands of individuals who must ethically practice their freedom to guarantee its actuality (Grumley, 1998: 61). By contesting the constrained subjectivities made available to them and in speaking out about their lived experience through making submissions to the Inquiry, members of the community practiced their freedom. This did not only have effects on the self-understandings of those that spoke out, because as members of the governed, these individuals were also able to speak out for others in the community.

As I emphasized in Chapter Three Foucault has recognized the moral significance of shared suffering and a form of equality that arises from the shared experience of being members of the governed. Foucault's writing on human rights presents a notion of citizenship that is global and cuts across nations and cultures (Foucault, 2002: 474). As individuals, we have an obligation towards other human beings who suffer and there are always opportunities in governmental space to take action in the political realm where the

fate of the governed is decided (Foucault, 2002: 474-475). The responsibility of the governed is to ensure that human suffering and misery always has a voice and to recognize that opportunities do exist for private individuals to act and intervene in the political realm (Foucault, 2002: 474-475). In speaking out, and particularly in making submissions to the Inquiry, individuals within the community spoke out as members of the governed. While the Inquiry was a particular political space created by particular individuals within the community, in speaking out in support of those who could not speak for themselves, a wider political space of possibility was created for all the community. By questioning the necessity of their lived experience, the community of Cabramatta attempted to re-fashion the constrained forms of identity imposed upon them and to situate themselves differently within the space of power.

This brings my Foucauldian analysis of power in Cabramatta to a close. In the following discussion I will outline some important issues for Foucault's account of power and articulate these as gaps within a broader picture of power. In Chapter Seven I will outline in more detail two significant limitations for a Foucauldian analysis of power in Cabramatta: that Foucault's account of power appears to rule out a normative foundation upon which to ground moral judgments concerning human interaction; and that the central role played by the "politics of the self" within Foucault's account minimizes the importance of collective forms of politics.

## **Chapter Seven: Limitations of a Foucauldian Analysis of Power**

### **A NORMATIVE FOUNDATION FOR POWER: THE PROBLEM FOR FOUCAULT**

While the absence of an explicit normative framework for Foucauldian power has prompted much scholarly debate among Foucault's critics and readers alike, the question of an implicit normative foundation of Foucauldian power has also been raised in various ways (Fraser, 1981; Connelly, 1985; Ransom, 1997; Tobias, 2005; Grumley, 2006).

Nancy Fraser emphasizes that in "bracketing" the liberal normative framework, Foucault is left without a strong explanation of why particular forms of power and why we should resist it (Fraser, 1981: 283). While Fraser acknowledges that an alternative normative framework may underpin Foucault's account of power, she questions the possibility of being able to provide a satisfactory framework that does not rely on appeals to the notions of rights (Fraser, 1981: 283).

In moving beyond the framework of legitimacy that underpins liberalism, Foucault's analysis of power relations is complex, comprehensive and critically engaged, without being supported by a normative foundation (Fraser, 1981: 273). This lack of a normative foundation leaves Foucault open to charges of promoting a social domain where principles of rights and justice are invalid (Fraser, 1981: 273; Ransom, 1997: 25). Informing these issues is the question of whether one can make moral judgments about

the human cost associated with practices of power without the reassuring foundation provided by a teleological account of what it means to be a human being.

From a Foucauldian perspective, this appears to leave us with some unanswered questions concerning when and why we should resist relations of power. Peter Digeser (1992: 984-985) recognizes that Foucault's account of power is grounded upon a particular view of the character of human life, arguing that his account of resistance implies a universality that does not sit unproblematically within his "nominalist framework". Foucault's thoughts on the basis of human rights appears to support Digeser's observations. In discussing the banning of the Solidarity movement in Poland, Foucault argues that; "... human rights are, above all, that which one confronts governments with. They are the limits that one places on all possible governments." (Foucault, 2002: 471). As Foucault departs from a liberalist framework and a rights-based approach in his analysis of power (see Fraser, 1981), the notion of human rights he appeals to in the context of the above quotation requires further explanation. Foucault maintains that it is possible to guarantee human rights without recourse to a universal notion of what defines good and evil, through engaging in a *moral labor* of thought that takes into account individual experience and forms of self-chosen existence (Foucault, 2002: 471).

Foucault's argument is anchored in the notion that right and wrong in the context of human rights cannot be grounded in an authoritative notion of universal morality, but must be grounded in the shared connection to social events that we all have as human

beings. Foucault expresses this in terms of the capacity for human beings to engage in moral reflection upon suffering, which despite a plurality of perspectives, views and understandings, represents an experience deeply shared by everyone (Foucault, 2002: 474-475).

Fraser (1981; 384) has argued that Foucault's call to resistance presupposes values or norms, yet his rejection of a normative framework means that the reasons why we should resist modern forms of power requires further explication. However, as Ransom recognizes, Foucault views norms as that which power employs to shape and constitute human beings and as such what is important is that in resisting relations of power, we create new forms of individuality that can give rise to new norms and standards (Ransom, 1997: 172-173). For Foucault we must engage in a "practical critique" of ourselves through the adoption of a critical attitude that questions the necessity of our experiences and how these have shaped our subjectivities (Foucault, 2003a: 52-53).

For Foucault, the self is not "given to us", but created through relations of power and through our own creative efforts (Foucault, 2003a: 109-110). Foucault offers no definitive account of human well-being other than one associated with the possibility of self-understanding, or as Ransom puts it "We can encounter ourselves as we are only when we become something at least a little different from what we are." (Ransom, 1997: 176).

## THE PROBLEM OF RESISTANCE

The limitations associated with the absence of an explicit normative framework for Foucault's account of power can be drawn out with the help of my prior discussion of Cabramatta. In my analysis I discussed Maher and Dixon's ethnographic study of a street level drug market in Cabramatta and the health dangers associated with increased drugs policing. In resisting policing activity, dangerous practices that embodied inherent risks to health and life were adopted by drug users and dealers (Maher & Dixon, 1999: 496). In attempting to respond to powerful policing strategies, these forms of resistance embodied a significant cost to the health and wellbeing of individuals involved and to the wider community.

This example raises the problem of how one can make moral distinctions between different types of resistance from a purely Foucauldian perspective. As Brent Pickett describes it, this is a problem associated with the notion of unlimited resistance and the possible endorsement of the "worst forms of engagement" (Pickett, 1996: 465). Purely from the perspective of everyday moral intuitions, it would seem crucial that a distinction must be made between forms of resistance that are conducive to wellbeing and those that undermine it. In Cabramatta for instance, I would want to identify the courage of members of the community who made submissions to the Inquiry at risk to their personal safety, while also being highly concerned about the risks taken by user/dealers to resist the impact of saturation drug policing. According to Foucault's account, both could be



considered forms of transgressive resistance, yet both these responses have very different moral outcomes in terms of the constitution of subjectivity.

As Maher and Dixon (1999) identified, heroin users involved in Cabramatta's drug market began to lose their immediate access to health services and outreach programs, they became susceptible to the increased possibility of disease transmission through used syringes and their relocation to the outer neighborhood meant that they were further exposed to the risks associated with drug overdose. It is clear that some forms of resistance that emerged from changes in drugs policing in Cabramatta constituted alternative subjectivities that were even further constraining and harmful. Pickett (1996: 465) argues that Foucault draws upon an implicit normative framework to support the necessity of resistance, while refusing to place limits on the forms that resistance should take. Without a clear account of the value system underpinning Foucauldian power, it is difficult to make a moral distinction between different forms of resistance in Cabramatta. If the moral value of resistance lies only in the creation of novel forms of subjectivity, then any form of resistance, no matter how dangerous or harmful, is valuable as long as new subjectivities are created.

While there are definite clues as to how a moral position could be adopted towards both power and resistance within a Foucauldian perspective of power, it is important to be cautious when trying to uncover an implicit appeal to values within Foucault's writing. There is much potential contained within Foucault's account of the care of the self where attempts to transform the self to attain a particular way of being in

the world we constitute ourselves as ethical subjects in the context of *our relationships with others* (Foucault, 1997a: 282-284).

Foucault calls for us to practice our freedom ethically, arguing that a moral labour on the self, a care for the self, is required for freedom to support an ethos which is ‘good’ and ‘beautiful’ (Foucault, 1997a: 286). Foucault here associates this beautiful or good ethos with both possibility and limitation; the knowledge that as human beings we have many possibilities and that our limitations can be understood in terms of our relations with others. As we are always within the networks of power, the care of the self as an ethical practice of freedom can allow us to manage the domain of power to ensure that it remains as open as possible (Foucault, 1997a: 298). Foucault’s ethical reflections alert us to the dangers of a political realm where power has solidified into domination and where inter-subjective relations are insufficiently open. It also alerts us to the dangers to ourselves and to others when we fail to engage in the kind of labour on the self that gives a moral form to this freedom (Foucault, 1997a: 299-300). What is implicit in Foucault’s account, but what requires further elaboration, is the moral value of individual practices of freedom for the inter-subjective realm as a whole.

While these are promising lines of enquiry, there are limits to how far it can take us in the search for a moral foundation of Foucauldian power and resistance. From a Nietzschean perspective, William Connolly argues that Foucault’s ethical sensibility is in a sense beyond good and evil in that it compels us to question conventional representations of good and evil, to recognise their contingency and to understand that

they are not necessary (Connelly, 1993: 366-367) Connelly identifies several aspects of Foucault's ethical sensibility including the contingency of values and morals, an active embrace of ambiguity, generosity towards self and others and the exploration of new possibilities for inter-subjective relations (Connelly, 1993: 367-368). While to support possibilities for new forms of subjectivity appears to be the goal of practices of self-constitution, providing a critical principle for Foucauldian power and freedom, it cannot on its own ground judgments about the good or evil of particular human experience nor can it provide an account of the kind of society that we should pursue to ensure human well-being.

#### **LIMITS TO THE POLITICS OF THE SELF**

In this section I will examine the traditional criticism that Foucault's focus on individual acts of self-constitution prevent him from recognizing the possibilities of collective politics. Foucault's focus on the self has been criticized on the grounds that he does not develop an account of the possibilities associated with consensual political collectivity (Allen, 1999: 56; Simons, 1995: 102). As John Grumley has argued there are some problems associated with Foucault's efforts to situate the responsibility for human rights in private individuals whose commitment to solidarity is shaped only by the experience of being governed (Grumley, 2006: 62). Indeed, in situating self-care and

individual work on the self as the basis for politics, Foucault ignored the possibilities of a more conversational dialogue driven model of politics (Grumley, 2006: 65). While Foucault does make a connection between a politics of the self and the possibilities of collective action that it can enable, the question of the role of collective action and the power manifested by it for constituting the conditions under which individual self-transformation can be supported remains unaddressed.

For Foucault, the practice of resistance is an integral dimension of what it means for individuals to achieve an autonomy that represents a particular form of maturity. This maturity is grounded in an ethic of existence and a permanent questioning of the present and the limits it embodies (Foucault, 1991a: 42-43). This philosophical ethos requires that as individuals we orient ourselves towards the possibilities open to our active constitution as autonomous subjects, that we work towards the transgression of limits in order to open up new possibilities for subjectivity and for practices of freedom (Foucault, 1991a: 46). This ethos requires a recognition of our constitution through power while locating within ourselves a capacity to resist or a form of autonomy that supports self-transformation (Allen, 2011: 44).

While Foucault's later writing recognizes the promise of transient forms of collective politics based on individual contestation and work on the self (Foucault, 2003a: 21), he retains a cautious attitude towards forms of collective politics that have the capacity to retain permanence or stability over time. Foucault's concerns about collective politics are grounded upon his concern to illuminate the possibilities of individual and

creative practices of questioning, resistance and contestation. However stable forms of human togetherness also support the establishment of political practices that could ground creative practices of individual freedom. In the context of the Cabramatta case study, it is apparent that the possibility of individual transformation for members of the community was in many ways enabled by the kind of stable forms of collectivity that Foucault found questionable. It was within the space of the Inquiry that previously marginalized individuals were able to give a public face to their private suffering.

## **THE POSSIBILITIES OF COLLECTIVE POLITICS**

...the idea of a consensual politics may indeed at a given moment serve either as regulatory principle or better yet as a critical principle with respect to other political forms; but I do not believe that that liquidates the problem of the power relation.  
(Foucault, 1991a: 378)

Within Foucault's account of power, the "politics of the self" can be understood as providing a foundation for a relationship between the ethical self and the political self (Simons, 1995: 102-104). As I discussed in Chapter Three, Foucault draws attention to the interactive relationship between the practices of power that constitute subjectivity and

the attempts at individual self-constitution exemplified within practices of self-care. Foucault's lack of development of the possibilities of collective politics reflects his concern to always remain aware of the dangers of consensus and to recognize the possibility of dominative power relations in all human relationships (Foucault, 1991a: 377-380). While Foucault does not ignore the possibility of human solidarity, he argues that what provides its foundation is a form of shared human suffering that arises from our collective membership of the "community of the governed" (Foucault, 2002: 475). Foucault draws our attention to the possibilities for private individuals to intervene in the management of conduct stating that:

The will of individuals must make a place for itself in a reality of which governments have attempted to reserve a monopoly for themselves, that monopoly which we need to wrest from them little by little and day by day (Foucault, 2002: 475)

For Foucault, solidarity is grounded in the social space of everyday power relations and it is in this context that Foucault discerns the principles that establish the right to speak out against governmental power. Foucault's principles are as follows: the fact that we are all members of the community of the governed means that we have a responsibility to demonstrate solidarity with others; that governments must be confronted with the consequences of their actions; that human suffering grounds the right to speak

out against governments who are responsible for human misery; and that the governed have a right to intervene directly in the domain of possibility shaped by the art of governing (Foucault, 2002: 475). Our relations to others retain an importance for own efforts at self-transformation within Foucault's account. Foucault's discussion of *parresia* as a transformative activity acknowledges that it is in the context of seeking the judgment of others in a public space that our relationship to truth is questioned (Foucault, 2011: 44-45). In *parresia* the speaker not only makes a statement but also reveals that this statement is what they believe to be true, thus representing what Foucault calls a pact of the speaking subject with himself, binding the self to the statement (Foucault, 2011: 64-65). What is most important is that the practice of binding oneself to the truth is constitutive of subjectivity (Foucault, 2011: 67-68). The public nature of revealing a shared experience can lead to a form of "moralization" that has widespread effects on others (Foucault, 2002: 468).

Foucault appreciates the public dimensions of subjective experiences, arguing that while an experience is something only an individual can have, one can only have an experience at all if it is also available to others (Foucault, 2002: 245). The care of the self as a form of individual transformation has inevitable political consequences, in that the relationship with truth that is questioned by the individual who engages in self-constitution, opens up a new experience that is accessible to others (Foucault, 2002: 244). The key point for Foucault is that the care of the self represents experiences that, although particular and individual, have wider public implications in that other

individuals are able to connect with and thus involve themselves on the process of transformation (Foucault, 2002: 245-246). This is what grounds the possibility of human solidarity for Foucault; the shared experience of suffering that arises from the shaping of subjectivity and the public resolve to question and transform individual experience.

Thus, it is via acts of questioning, individual resistance and self-constitution that the realm of inter-subjectivity can be transformed. We can establish a “we” through first engaging in individual acts of self-questioning and self-constitution of action: the individual work is what supports the possibility of a “community of action” (Foucault, 1991a: 385). The implications of this view are that the value and meaningfulness of the kind of political collectivities theorized by Arendt will be dependent upon the extent to which individuals have engaged in self-questioning and self-government. In other words, the possibility of collective power depends upon an individual refusing what power has made them and engaging in acts of self-constitution.

The ways in which individuals can transform their private suffering into a shared public experience is shaped by the social realm. The historical context and the social constraints and opportunities embodied by particular societies interact with an individual’s political skill, their capacity to engage with their own limits and to connect with others in a meaningful way (Simons, 1995: 4). Foucault envisioned forms of collectivity based on friendship and the pursuit of new experiences rather than on the rational acceptance of shared values and rules of behavior (Simons, 1995: 102). The questioning of established moral codes enables the formation of new collectivities that



are drawn together by the relevance of the question for their own subjective experience (Foucault, 1997a: 114-115).

The kind of collective politics that a “politics of the self” could create is sketched out by Foucault’s views concerning the banning of the Polish political organization *Solidarity*. Foucault draws attention to the significance of an individual’s consciousness of being together with others founded upon a *shared abhorrence* of a regime that prevented the creation of new social relations and dislocated lived experience (Foucault, 2002: 466-467). This shared abhorrence attained a public face through texts and discourses, providing a common collective ground for resistance where individual interests were put aside to focus on the collective possibilities of overcoming the regime (Foucault, 2002: 468). What is important is that the individual struggle represented in the relationship of oneself to oneself can attain public significance when it is put in a form (texts and discourses) which support the creation of something that is common to all (Foucault, 2002: 467).

While Foucault’s legacy is a platform upon which we can begin to explore the possibilities for a collective politics grounded on shared human suffering, it also embodies limitations, not least of which resides in an individual’s capacity to articulate private suffering in a way that would ensure public recognition. In the context of Cabramatta, without a public forum like the Inquiry, the shared suffering of the Cabramatta community may not have been fully heard. There is also the question of what holds collectives together after this shared suffering has been addressed through political

means in that Foucault's account of power does not fully address the way that collective power can support individual resistance (Allen, 2001: 144).

Foucault's political realm is uncertain, intransigent and always subject to alteration, making it hard to ground a stable foundation for a collective politics that provides any kind of stability for human existence. A stable foundation for a new way of addressing Cabramatta's problems emerged through the legislation prompted by the findings of the Public Enquiry. The stable structures and forms of political power that are often experienced as constraining can also provide the support for the kinds of reforms that our efforts at a 'politics of the self' have enabled. This is an aspect of lived experience that Foucault does not fully theorize, but it is one that proved extremely important for the community of Cabramatta.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The aim of Section Two was to demonstrate the capacity of Foucault's account of power to illuminate the complexity of the workings of power in an applied context. The manner in which power shapes human subjectivity was explored through the socio-political response to the crime and drug problems within Cabramatta. It was argued that discursive practices worked to impose an artificial unity upon a diverse community and

that strategies of policing adopted to manage the drug problems in Cabramatta contributed to the constitution of constrained forms of subjectivity.

I explored the manner in which relations of power and freedom shaped the character of Cabramatta's political spaces, articulating them as sites of subjection and empowerment. I also articulated two significant limitations for a Foucauldian analysis of power within the applied context of the Cabramatta case study; the problems of a normative foundation for Foucauldian power and resistance and the limits with a politics of the self. While I argued that Foucault's account of power acknowledges the moral implications of dominative power relations, the relationship between power and human wellbeing could not be adequately addressed from within a purely Foucauldian framework. The problems with this aspect of Foucault's account were articulated through the Cabramatta case study in the context of a particularly detrimental form of resistance that exposed the dangers of some forms of contestation for human lived experience.

It was argued that while Foucault's later writing recognizes the promise of transient forms of collective politics based on individual contestation and work on the self, Foucault's cautious attitude towards the character of consensus meant that he did not fully develop an account of the relationship between a politics of the self and collective political action. In the context of the Cabramatta case study, I suggested that the possibility of individual transformation was in many ways enabled by the kind of stable forms of collectivity that Foucault found questionable.

These limitations of Foucauldian power provide the framework for my forthcoming discussion of a uniquely different account of power offered by Hannah Arendt. Arendt's theorization of power as collective action and her insights on the role of power in the preservation of a world that supports human well-being, leads me to argue that Arendtian power can critically address the limitations of Foucault's account. I will begin Section Three of my thesis by outlining Arendt's unique contribution towards a deeper understanding of how power mediates lived experience. As with Section One and Two, I will engage in a conceptual examination of Arendtian power before providing a practical analysis of power in Cabramatta from an Arendtian perspective.

## **SECTION THREE: AN ARENDTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON POWER**

### **Introduction**

In this Section I will illuminate Hannah Arendt's distinctive contribution towards an understanding of the relationship between human beings and their world through a conceptual examination of her account of power and a practical analysis of power in Cabramatta. This will allow me to demonstrate the importance of Arendt's insights on power for a detailed understanding of the complexity of the ways in which power mediates human lived experience. Corresponding to the overall aim of my thesis and to my attempt to provide a more detailed picture of the relationship between power and lived experience, my discussion of Arendtian power will be presented in three parts. Chapter Eight will discuss some central notions that inform Arendt's unique account of power and Chapter Nine will examine the characterisations of power that Arendt offers in her various works. In Chapter Ten I return to the Cabramatta case study where I will critically apply Arendt's insights to the aspects of the relationship between power and lived experience left un-addressed by my Foucauldian analysis.

Arendt's account emphasises the collective dimensions of power and the importance of collective political achievements for human life. In characterising power as an imminent property of human inter-subjectivity where power represents "...the human

ability not just to act but to act in concert” (Arendt, 1998: 44), Arendt emphasises both the strengths and fragility of a power that is collectively realised. Arendt’s perspective on power recognises the empowering possibilities inherent to our relationships with others and our capacity to act together to create a space of possibility. In order to illuminate the complexity of Arendt’s account of power, I will provide a detailed examination of some key concepts.

The intricacies of Arendt’s writing is evidenced by the many interpretations offered by her readers and critics, as well as the numerous aspects of her work that are examined, analysed and debated. Arendt’s concern with an authentic political realm of human action, her analysis of totalitarianism and modern revolutions, and her deliberations on the meaning of human freedom, reflect a set of ideas that provide a rich source for understanding her account of power. In Chapter Eight the scope of my analysis will be limited to those key concepts that relate most directly to power: the notions of plurality, natality and action, Arendt’s concept of “world”, her related account of “the political”, and her account of politically actualised freedom.

As a starting point for my analysis, I propose the following working definition of Arendtian power:

*Power is a relational phenomenon expressed through a form of inter-subjective human agency that depends upon diversity (plurality) and solidarity (togetherness based upon human plurality). It both conditions and is*

*conditioned by, a humanly constructed public space of equality and freedom. Power is worldly and illuminative of the hidden potential of human being.*

With this preliminary characterization in mind, I will aim to provide a more detailed definition of power as I progress through my conceptual and practical analyses. Arendt's characterization of the conditions of human existence, the activities through which human beings shape their lives and the domains of inter-subjectivity where human beings relate to each other are all important aspects of Arendt's theorization of the relationship between power and lived experience. In order to paint a more detailed picture of power from an Arendtian perspective, Chapter Eight will begin with an examination of some central concepts that inform Arendt's reflections on human experience.

## Chapter Eight: Key Insights Underpinning Arendtian Power

### THE “VIVA ACTIVA”: LABOR, WORK AND ACTION

In her seminal book *The Human Condition*, Arendt provides an in-depth analysis of the central activities of human existence--what Arendt refers to as the *viva activa*--where she theorizes the connections between the conditions of human life and the activities that correspond to them (Arendt, 1998: 7). The *vita activa* represents three activities and their corresponding conditions as follows: the activity of *labor* which responds to biological necessities of growth and decay inherent to the biological condition of *life* itself; the activity of *work* which responds to the artificiality of human existence apart from the continual cycle of the biological life process- that is the condition of *worldliness*; and finally the activity of *action* (which Arendt argues is the only human activity that takes place directly between individuals) and which corresponds with the human condition of *plurality* “...the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world.” (Arendt, 1998: 7).

These human conditions and their corresponding activities are further subsumed under a framework characterized by natality and mortality, two “general conditions” of human existence which exemplify the ends which these activities pursue (Arendt, 1998: 8). As “...the new beginning inherent in birth...” Arendt defines natality as the human



capacity to act and thus to make a new beginning in the world (Arendt, 1998: 9). Natality is the ontological foundation for human action, in that, as beings born into the world, we enter the world as a new beginning via our *mere capacity for action*, yet to fully experience this capacity requires that we must make a second beginning *through action* (Arendt, 1998: 246-247). Mortality is also a general condition of human life (Arendt, 1998: 8) representing our transient existence in the world and the biological fact that as human beings we have a limited life which will end with our death. The only certainty for mortal beings is the “law of mortality”, yet action expresses a miraculous new beginning, interrupting the processes of our human decline, (Arendt, 1998: 246-247).

While Arendt holds a Heideggerian view of the historical situatedness of human beings within a world constituted by the projects of others, her focus on natality emphasizes the communicative and political character of the relations between the individual and the world (Brunkhorst, 2000: 188). What prompts us to make a beginning through action has its foundations in “the biological”- in the fact of our birth - yet once we have acted in the world we ensure the beginning of a distinct and unique human identity (Arendt, 1998: 176-178). This draws attention to the way in which the birth of each human being is the beginning of a life in a world of others where action makes a difference. Human agency and the capacity to insert one’s own unique identity is crucial to Arendt and in a sense action is a response to the limits inherent to the condition of mortality.

The concept of natality plays an important role for Arendt's account of power that goes beyond the idea that our capacity for beginning can hold the key to how we can respond to the fact that our lives are mortal and will come to an end.<sup>26</sup> For Heidegger, human existence is characterized by mortality and an orientation towards death that is realized either authentically or in-authentically (Heidegger, 1996: 52: 236-246). Arendt takes a "critical stance" towards the idea of being towards death within her work with her focus on natality (Young-Bruehl, 1982: 76). For Arendt, our capacity for action (our agency) allows us to insert ourselves into the world of others (Arendt, 1998: 176-177). Arendt emphasizes that without the capacity to act within the world and express our initiative as beginners, the realm of human affairs, of history and of the artifacts we have created would have no durability (Arendt, 1998: 246).

Arendt uses the terms "ruin" and "destruction" to describe what a mortal human life would leave behind without the promise of action (Arendt, 1998: 246) and in doing so she emphasizes that when we act we do not merely exercise our agency within a space of others, but we create a space where our action matters. The close connection between action and natality as the human capacity for spontaneity and new beginnings, prompts Arendt to argue that "...natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought." (Arendt, 1998: 9). Before I take a

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<sup>26</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the importance of natality, see the interesting and insightful book by Patricia Bowen-Moore titled *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality* (1989).

closer look at action, it is necessary to provide a brief account of Arendt's discussion of the human activities of labor and work.

### ***Labor***

Human existence is necessarily conditioned by biological processes that embody a distinctly human life within the wider embrace of nature (Arendt, 1998: 7). The activity of *labor* responds to the fulfillment of our biological needs and as such it is necessary to human life in its continual production of goods to be consumed (Canovan, 1992: 122-123). When Arendt talks about labor, she is referring to the kind of activity that produces 'vital necessities' or those consumer goods or activities that ensure the continuance of biological life itself (Arendt, 2003: 170). The activity of labor is repetitive and endless, partly because it responds to the cyclical movement of our bodies and their biological functions and partly because the goods it produces have little durability and are continually needed (Arendt, 2003: 170-171). Labor is associated with consumption and the sustenance of biological needs; as part of the never ceasing cycles of nature the laboring activity that sustains human biological life is incessantly repetitive, continually devouring that which it creates to sustain life (Arendt, 1998: 98-100).

### ***Work***

Work, as opposed to labor, is orientated towards the world rather than to human life, so that the products of work provide durability to the world and a backdrop of permanence against which the products of labor are consumed by life itself (Arendt,

1998: 94). Not only do the objects produced by work provide a structure for the consumables produced through labor, they also provide the reification of what is produced by action and speech (Arendt, 1998: 95). By reification, Arendt refers to the way in which the intangible products of action can be transformed into a longer lasting form, through literary works or artistic creations for example (Arendt, 1998: 95). The activity of work sustains the relationship between the world and the other human activities of labor and action through its structural support of the products of labor and through its transformation of the intangible results of action into a form that ensures remembrance, as Arendt states:

Human life, in so far as it is world-building, is engaged in a constant process of reification, and the degree of worldliness of produced things, which all together form the human artifice, depends upon their greater or lesser permanence in the world itself. (Arendt, 1998: 96)

Work has a central role in preserving the world for future human beings who require the existence of objects and things, to which they relate and which binds them together (Arendt, 1998: 9). For Arendt, we work to create objects and institutions that stand outside of the fragility and transience of mortal human existence, thus creating a world that is more durable and stable than biological life as; “Within its borders each

individual life is housed, while this world itself is meant to outlast and transcend them all.” (Arendt, 1998: 7).

### ***Action***

Unlike the activity of labor which is repetitive, endless and responds to the cyclical movement of our bodies and their biological functions (Arendt, 2003: 170-171), action responds to the human condition of plurality and is an activity that takes place between human beings in their uniqueness (Arendt, 1998: 7-8). In other words, as unique human beings with an individual capacity for action, we depend upon the existence of other unique human beings with whom we mutually interact. This corresponds to the character of human life where our actions are activities that involve others (Canovan, 1995: 131). Arendt expresses the dynamic nature of human *being*, through what she calls the web of human relationships, described in terms of an inter-subjective realm created by the actions and speech of every individual, both past and present, whose own unique story becomes part of human history (Arendt, 2003: 179-180).

The importance of the human capacity to change the world through action is emphasized by Arendt in the following quotation:

Without action, without the capacity to start something new and thus articulate the new beginning that comes into the world with the birth of each human being, the life of man, spent between

birth and death, would indeed be doomed beyond salvation.

(Arendt, 2003: 181)

Action reminds us that while we are mortal beings, the meaning of our lives is not decided by our mortality, but by our capacity to act within a world that will endure after we have gone (Arendt, 2003: 181). Without a space where action is meaningful, the individual is deprived of leaving a story behind, of a unique human life that has meaning. For Arendt, action is the only human activity that can express the distinct personal identity of an individual and allows the story of each human being to become part of the realm of human affairs (Arendt, 2003: 21).

It is important to introduce the notion of worldlessness here and to explain its dangers for the individual from an Arendtian perspective. Arendt articulates worldlessness as a lack of connection to the objective reality constituted through human togetherness (Canovan, 1995: 92). Arendt emphasizes the cost of worldlessness in terms of a loss of what is common to a plurality of individuals, what connects them and constitutes a shared reality and what supports the full appearance of human beings in their distinctness and equality (Arendt, 1995: 13-16). For Arendt our relationship with the humanly constituted world guarantees our individuality and provides permanence for our lives (Canovan, 1995: 107-108). Arendt emphasizes that without a connection to the world of human affairs, we cannot preserve the meaning of our actions over time: we cannot make a long lasting difference in the world (Arendt, 1998: 55).

From an Arendtian perspective, the conditions of human experience in the world are not a limitation on individual agency, but a condition for it, and thereby for the expression of power, in that as human beings we can act with others to create new possibilities and to express power through acting with others (Arendt, 1998: 200). In acting and speaking with others, human beings appear in a public space and inter-subjectively disclose who they are as distinct individuals (Arendt, 1998: 179). For Arendt human identity is the *who-ness* of human *being*, a quality not accessible to the individual, but only to those to whom the individual appears as a speaking and acting being (Arendt, 1998: 179).

This aspect of Arendt's account of the disclosure of identity through action is quite complex and it hinges on a distinction she makes between knowing what we are and who we are. What we are embodies our talents, our preferences, personalities and character traits: that which is subject to change and can be revealed or hidden at will (Arendt, 1998: 179). Who we are is the question of meaning that action answers via new beginnings within the world, where the disclosure of our unique identities fall within an already existing network of inter-subjective relations (Arendt, 1998: 178-184). The disclosure of the *who* within an already existing world supports a new story to emerge that has consequences for the stories of others (Arendt, 1998: 184).

While we can know what we are, it is more difficult to know who we are in the sense that it is only through acting with others that one's identity is fully revealed: it is not something that is accessible to self-understanding based on contemplation and it is for

this reason that action involves risk (Arendt, 1998: 179-180). Arendt's point is that the uniqueness of human life in distinction from other forms of life is rooted not in our particular biology, but in our relations with others in the mode of speech and action (Canovan, 1995: 133). Through her account of action as disclosive of identity, Arendt emphasizes that it is not only the reality of the world that is secured by our capacity to appear and act with others, but our own reality as distinct persons (Canovan, 1995: 134).

## **NATALITY AND PLURALITY**

Nativity is central to the expression of new beginnings and thus the possibilities of meaningful action in the world (Arendt, 1998: 247). This is a beginning that is intrinsic to being born into the world and it is a new beginning that gains a worldly reality through human initiative (Arendt, 1998: 9). There is an aspect of natality in every human activity, yet in action the political significance of human initiative becomes apparent (Arendt, 1998: 9). While natality is the general condition for action, plurality is the specific condition that ensures actions in the world retain their full meaning as an activity that connects diverse individuals (Arendt, 1998: 8-9). As Arendt argues:

Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same



as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live. (Arendt, 1998: 8)

This captures the notion of human existence as being-in-the-world and Arendt's account of action reveals human beings as essentially beings-in-the-world (Brunkhorst, 2000: 182).

From a Heideggerian perspective being-in-the-world is essentially a being-with-others whom we come to understand through the social roles they play, independent of their unique individuality (Mulhall, 2005: 72-73). Self-understandings, in so far as we understand ourselves through our relations with others, will also embody reference to the social roles we take up (Mulhall, 2005: 72). According to Heidegger the way that the world is structured discloses the Dasein of others we encounter in terms of "...their heedful being in the surrounding world in terms of the things at hand in that world." (Heidegger, 1996, 26: 116). This has implications for self-understanding in the context that knowing oneself is grounded upon our relations with others, as Heidegger states:

Knowing oneself is grounded in primordially understanding being-with. It operates initially in accordance with the nearest kind of being-together-in-the-world in the understanding of what Da-sein circumspectly finds and takes care of with the others. (Heidegger, 1996, 26: 116)

While Arendt accepts that human being is necessarily a being-with-others, she hones in on particular aspect of human life that precedes individual action and is accessible to all individuals: the web of human relationships (Motroshilova, 2015: 38). The web of human relationships is constituted by human togetherness and all human actions are undertaken within an already existing web that not only shapes the possibilities of new actions, but is also transformed by the new processes that each human action begins (Arendt, 1998: 184).

As individuals our distinctness is revealed through our human capacity for action; yet action means nothing without a world of diverse others who can respond to our actions with their own. Consequently, plurality is characterized by equality and distinction: a recognizable commonality between human beings who nevertheless embody a diversity of differences (Arendt, 1998: 175-176). However, plurality reveals more than the meaning of human action in that human diversity illuminates the many dimensions of the world (Arendt, 1998: 199). The many individual perspectives on the world reveal its objectivity, so that "... the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others" (Arendt, 1998: 198-199).

What plurality ensures is that a common world of reality, which is always characterized by many distinct and unique perspectives, continues to provide human

experience with an objective dimension, as Arendt states:

Under the conditions of a common world, reality is not guaranteed primarily by the “common nature” of all men who constitute it, but rather by the fact that, differences of position and the resulting variety of perspectives notwithstanding, everybody is always concerned with the same object. (Arendt, 1998: 57-58)

By the “same object” Arendt refers to that which retains its identity via its appearance to the many in their diversity (Arendt, 1998: 57-58). The common world is an object in this sense in that its commonality is only revealed via the many perspectives of distinct individuals who relate to it. For Arendt the objectivity that comes from the total of many perspectives comprises the reality of the world and this reality is guaranteed not by a common human nature, but by the commonality of the world itself (Arendt, 1998: 57).

What is emphasized in this context is the importance of the shared world as a link that ties us to others in a way that allows us to recognize the value of our own unique perspective and the value of the perspectives of others. As beings-in-the-world with others, our subjective experiences are inter-subjectively shaped, yet it is possible to fail to recognize that the objectivity of the world is also guaranteed by the presence of many

diverse perspectives. This leads to an unrealistic view of the world and our place within it, a danger that Arendt explains in terms of an in-capacity to appear with others and to fail to achieve a kind of immortality through action (Arendt, 1998: 58). Arendtian power does not emerge from a shared biological identity but from a “commonality” of uniqueness (Allen, 1999: 105).

As human beings we are all different to each other and it is this uniqueness that we share (Arendt, 1998: 8). There is a dialectical relationship between what we share as human beings (equality grounded by the commonality of our uniqueness) and the human capacity to distinguish our uniqueness through action, thus our appearance in a realm of equality allows us to reveal our uniqueness (Allen, 1999: 105). As we are all beings-in-the-world, we experience the world as beings who share a world with others. However, we are also as individuals whose experience of this shared world is unique and particular. The power of collective action is conditioned by a realm of intersubjectivity which demands recognition of the equality of others (I am the same) and a recognition that as a unique human being I am distinct for others (I am different).

Arendt recognizes that it is possible to value and preserve our unique distinctiveness as individuals while also finding a common ground with others who are also distinct and unique. Because our reality is co-created and shared with others, we can build a foundation for human rights that could ensure human well-being based upon recognition of plurality and natality. As Canovan argues, a mutual guarantee of “sound human co-existence” and human rights requires recognition of the fact that as human beings, we

share a world with others who are the same as us, yet who are also very different (Canovan, 1995: 191). Through acting together in full recognition of this plurality human beings can establish institutions that act as “bulwarks against evil” (Canovan, 1995: 194). From the perspective of how human beings can live together in a way that ensures respect, tolerance and the mutual protection of rights, plurality has moral implications for human life. As we have seen, in appearing to each other in our diversity, we can ensure that the meaning of action is revealed and that world retains its objective reality.

For Arendt, the recognition of plurality requires a particular kind of space that allows human beings to appear to each other in all their diversity. This space is articulated as the “public realm” as both a common space of appearance and publicity and as the world itself as an objective reality considered from every human perspective (Arendt, 1998: 50-52). Arendt’s account of the importance of the public realm for human life is informed by a traditional distinction between “the private” and “the public”, and as a distinction with important implications for her account of power, it requires a more in-depth examination.

## **THE PRIVATE/PUBLIC DISTINCTION**

In *The Human Condition* Arendt presents a clear contrast between the way that the private/public distinction informs the life of the modern individual and the importance

of this traditional distinction in Ancient societies.<sup>27</sup> Turning to the experience of Ancient Greece, Arendt emphasizes two distinct dimensions of human experience in terms of the kind of associations they embody. The first is the private life in the household, where life together was organized in terms of human biology, individual interests and the overcoming of human necessity and the second is the public realm of the polis where, liberated from the necessities of the household, human beings could experience equality and freedom (Arendt, 1998: 30-31).

The separation between the private and public realms, once so apparent within the Ancient Greek experience, came to an end with “the rise of the social--which embodied the “public organization” of private concerns, including biological processes, economic concerns and the sustenance of life (Arendt, 1998: 38-46). An illustration of what Arendt is talking about with the rise of the social concerns the way in which individuals could attend to their everyday needs and social relationships and address problems associated with economics, poverty, reproduction and health, for example, within a public space.

According to Arendt, modern Western society continued to undermine the separation between the realm of privacy and the public realm of politics, inextricably changing the meaning of these concepts for the modern individual (Arendt, 1998: 38).

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<sup>27</sup> See Margaret Canovan’s insightful and in-depth discussion of Arendt’s aims, concerns and her treatment of the private/public distinction in *The Human Condition* (Canovan, 1995: 99-154).

Society formed a new space which continued to grow and consume the public and private spaces, overwhelming the public sphere with formerly private concerns, while also dispossessing the private realm of that which it used to protect (Arendt, 1998: 45). The private realm once provided a “shelter” within which individuals could withdraw from the demands of the public realm (Arendt, 1998: 59) yet the private sphere also protected those human activities whose character requires privacy, such as the laboring activities associated with addressing biological needs (Arendt, 1998: 73).

The implications of Arendt’s adoption of the private/public distinction for her analysis of human activities is important because the internal state of the public space altered when social relations became part of its character, leading to many changes in the context and content of human experience (Arendt, 1998: 46-47). From an Arendtian perspective the rise of “society” holds significant implications for human lived experience as Arendt states:

The emergence of society--the rise of housekeeping, its activities, problems, and organizational devices--from the shadowy interior of the household into the light of the public sphere, has not only blurred the old borderline between private and political, it has also changed almost beyond recognition the meaning of the two terms and their significance for the life of the individual and the citizen. (Arendt, 1998: 38)

Canovan argues that in *The Human Condition*, Arendt was concerned to provide an account of central human activities and their relationship to politics within a framework that was informed by her wider concerns with the limits of philosophy and her accounts of “totalitarianism” and “modernity” (Canovan, 1995: 102-103). The concept of “society” is thus central to Arendt’s fears about the dangers of totalitarianism and the limits of philosophical reasoning. The main thrust of the arguments in *The Human Condition* embodies two aspects of limits and possibility in that although human beings are necessarily limited by the conditions of human existence in the world, we all have a capacity to change the world through our actions (Canovan, 1995: 103).

These limits are important as Arendt not only emphasizes the possibilities of action, but also the dangers: the problems that come from acting into nature, in the sense of starting novel “processes” in the natural/human realm that embody uncertain and unpredictable results (Arendt, 1998: 231), the possibilities of power to support cruel forms of government (Arendt, 1970: 50), and the kinship between lying and action (Arendt, 2003: 569). For Arendt, the political realm is limited in that it cannot embody the entirety of human existence, as some of life is conditioned by aspects that cannot be changed (Arendt, 2003: 574). Just as we are born, we will also someday die, and our mortality is a limit that conditions human life.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> It is important to re-emphasize that Arendt does not consider mortality to be the defining condition of human existence. As I outlined earlier, Arendt emphasizes the political significance of natality (Arendt,



As such the existence of a space where human action can change the world through new beginnings must respect these limits to ensure its own integrity (Arendt, 2002: 574). Action requires a separate public space within which it attains its meaning for human life, as Arendt argues “With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world...” (Arendt, 1998: 176). Thus it is important to preserve a separation between the private and public spheres of life, in order to preserve a space where action is meaningful, and to protect aspects of human life that would be undermined by the processes that action begins. The consequences of action are unlimited because they take place in a realm of others who suffer, act, and react to other actions (Arendt, 1998: 190). Action can cause instability and unpredictability (Arendt, 1998: 191), and while any negative consequences may be partly offset by action’s revelatory capacity, this requires a public realm: the private sphere cannot illuminate the meaning of action, nor produce stories that endure beyond an individual’s lifetime (Arendt, 1998: 324). What Arendt is getting at here is that while action requires a public space to fulfill its role in ensuring the full appearance of human uniqueness, the character of the public realm also ensures that the implications and consequences can be managed in a way that is conducive to human

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1998: 9) and argues that action interrupts the automatism associated with the biological cycle within which mortal beings are caught up (Arendt, 1998: 246). The point is that our actions have effects in the world that can potentially outlast an individual’s mortal life.

flourishing. I will now examine Arendt's concept of world in more detail in order to draw out how Arendt's adoption of the private/public distinction informs her account of power.

### **ARENDT'S CONCEPT OF "THE WORLD"**

Arendt illuminates two dimensions of human existence with her articulation of human beings as inhabiting a natural biological world and humanly created world of culture, institutions and objects (Canovan, 1995: 106-107). This second sense of world also encompasses human affairs, providing a space within which human beings relate to each other in their togetherness (Arendt, 1998: 52). The humanly created world provides the space within which individuals can recognize their commonality without masking their diversity and distinctness (Arendt, 1998: 52).<sup>29</sup> Thus Arendt's highly complex notion of "world" as the common space between human beings who act and speak rests on a distinction between a humanly made home on earth characterized by manmade objects and inter-subjective relationships, and what is a natural biological environment for human beings as members of a species (Arendt, 1998: 204; Canovan, 1995: 106).

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<sup>29</sup> See Arendt's discussion of "The Question of War" in "The Promise of Politics" (Arendt, 2005: 153-161) Where she talks about the world as the natural world or physical habitat of human beings and a world of human relationships created through human action and speech.

The humanly constructed world is characterized by its commonality to every unique human being; a commonality that guarantees that every individual appearing within the world simultaneously gains access to a shared reality (Arendt, 1998: 208-209). By emphasizing the commonality of the world, Arendt draws attention to the requirements of “worldly reality” in the sense that for the humanly created world to retain its objectiveness it must encompass the opinions and views of the many. On this view the reality of the world is at risk when individuals and groups of people become isolated or are excluded from the human community, a state of affairs that has implications for our political life.<sup>30</sup> We are necessarily connected to a worldly space of human relationships that informs our experiences and equally our human activities condition the world in which we live and these man-made conditions have a powerful effect upon human life (Arendt, 1998: 9 & 22-23).

According to Arendt, power creates and preserves the man made world constituted by human activities:

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<sup>30</sup> Arendt discusses the commonality of the world in the context of common sense, arguing that common sense is a political quality that allows us to fully perceive reality and remain connected to the world created through speech and action (Arendt, 1998: 208-209).

Power preserves the public realm and the space of appearance, and as such it is also the lifeblood of the human artifice, which, unless it is the scene of action and speech, of the web of human affairs and the relationships and the stories engendered by them, lacks its ultimate *raison d'être*. Without being talked about by men and without housing them, the world would not be a human artifice... (Arendt, 1998: 204)

This emphasizes that the man-made world embodies two dimensions, one of which materially structures the space of human existence and the other, which figuratively structures the world as an inter-subjective space of meaning (Arendt, 1998: 182-183). The world of shared common interests reflects and creates tangible and objective states of affairs in the world and it is also superimposed with an intangible space of inter-subjectivity created through speech and action: a political space that concerns not merely speech and action concerning the common world of objective things, but also the speech and action that goes on between human beings concerning human beings themselves, or what Arendt calls the “subjective in-between”. (Arendt, 1998: 183).

In Arendt's analysis it is the activity of work which responds to the condition of worldliness (Arendt, 1998: 7). The condition of worldliness is related to the way in which the man made world - sustained by work - stands between the subjectivity of human

being and the natural biological world (Arendt, 1998: 137). Our relationship to the world we have created through work provides an objectivity to our subjective experience, allowing us to relate to each other through the medium of a shared world (Arendt, 1998: 137). As stated previously, work is orientated towards the world and its products provide a backdrop of permanence (Arendt, 1998: 94). Work also reifies the products of action and speech, transforming them into a more durable form (Arendt, 1998: 95). As human beings we live in and belong to a natural world within which we live under earthly conditions, yet we can also build and create a space within which we relate to each other and to the earth in ways that can be either destructive of our natural home or constitutive of a world of common interests (Arendt, 2005: 153-157).

Arendt's account of the world emphasizes the dangers of a social realm that is organized around biological commonality and necessity rather than the deliberate creation of a set of worldly interests. What is at stake for Arendt is the existence of a worldly space that binds a plurality of individuals together in a way that preserves their humanness: a willingness to share the world and to talk about the world together but from our own unique perspectives of it (Arendt, 1995: 24-25). This is a worldly space that is open to equality and the free exchange of views, perspectives and ideas and it is a space that is political in the sense of a space of freedom created by human beings (Arendt, 2005: 117). As Arendt argues, 'the world' is what transcends our mortal life, relating human beings from all times, past, present and future together through creating a robust public realm that preserves all that takes place within it (Arendt, 1998: 55).

We constitute a space of freedom through creating a world together and this requires a sphere where public appearance is guaranteed (Arendt, 2005: 119). It is in this context that the importance of the private/public distinction is most fully revealed. According to Arendt, the public realm represents the space in which human beings appear to each other and it also represents the in-between space that forms between human beings (Arendt, 1998: 50-52). The shared nature of the humanly created world provides a sense of objective reality to the many subjective views of the people who live in it. Without relating and separating human beings, the space of appearance loses its power to reveal a common reality (Arendt, 1998: 57-58). For Arendt action is the one human activity that allows every individual person to make an explicit appearance in the world, to make a new beginning with others (Arendt, 1998: 176-177), thus the public realm as the space of action is supportive of a meaningful human life. The failure to make a distinction between the social and public spheres of human life means that the most meaningful form of human experience - that which sets us apart from other forms of life and which relates human beings to each other-becomes indistinguishable from other forms of behavior (Arendt, 1998: 175-179). This has important implications for human experience and for the state of the world that is constituted through collective action.

From the perspective of the concerns and aims of my thesis, the most important aspect of Arendtian power lies in its importance to the preservation of the world as space of appearance and human relationships. Revealed from within an Arendtian perspective the relationship between power and lived experience gains a new complexity in the sense

that while human action is expressive of power, power makes the actualization of action possible through its support of a space where human beings appear to each other and where action gains its meaning. While power is supportive of this space, it is important to signal at this early stage that an Arendtian account of power does not rule out the actualization of power through morally questionable forms of human togetherness (Arendt, 1998: 203). The implications of this point will be discussed in more detail within Chapter Nine where I will provide an in-depth discussion of the character of Arendtian power.

My discussion thus far has provided a brief summary of some key notions that underpin Arendtian power. This background discussion is important for understanding Arendtian power in the context of the relationship Arendt theorize between power and lived experience. The subject matter of Chapter Nine is Arendtian power proper and my discussion will engage with some definitions and characterizations of power offered by Arendt in order to articulate the empowering possibilities of collective action and political participation for human life.

## **Chapter Nine: Arendtian Characterizations of Power**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I will examine and critically discuss Arendt's account of power in more detail. This will contribute towards the aim of providing a detailed account of the ways that power mediates human lived experience by exploring a view that recognizes the empowering possibilities of human togetherness and collective action. I will discuss the importance of the distinction between violence and power, the role of human solidarity, the normative implications of Arendt's account of power and the relationship between power and the political. I will also examine the relationship between freedom and power and the role of power for human well-being. In this chapter I will draw out in more detail Arendt's contribution to a richer understanding of the ways in which power mediates the relationship between power and lived experience.

I will end my analysis by offering a more nuanced characterization of Arendtian power that draws on the many insights offered by Arendt in her work. I will begin my discussion with an examination of the importance of the distinction between violence and power for Arendt's account.



## THE POWER/VIOLENCE DISTINCTION

The first characterization of power that I will examine comes from Arendt's book *On Violence*, where power is understood apart from forms of domination and in distinction from violence, force, strength and authority (Arendt, 1970: 43-46). Arendt theorizes a particularly strict division between violence and power arguing that power and violence refer to disparate realities: power is an end in itself, while violence is always instrumental as a means to another end such as the consolidation of individual strength, successful rule over others or victory on the battlefield (Arendt, 1970: 44-46). The distinction between power and violence hinges on the notion of *legitimacy* in the sense that while power is legitimated through the endorsement and support of many diverse human beings, violence needs only isolated individuals and relies only on future justification (Arendt, 1970: 51-52). In other words, the lone individual can exert violence over others through weapons or other means of force, while multiple individuals are required to empower a person or group through their collective support. The use of implements allows violence to effectively bypass agreement, overcome power and use coercion to achieve its goals, as Arendt states:

Violence can always destroy power; out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command, resulting in the most instant

and perfect obedience. What can never grow out of it is power.

(Arendt, 1970: 53)

At most, violence can ground group coherence, binding human beings together through a shared sense of human mortality, a form of commonality that can never find political expression (Arendt, 1970: 67-69). Arendt argues that despite its presence in political life violence cannot create a political space as power can because the collective practice of violence creates a form of human community that can never be long-lasting (Arendt, 1970: 66-69). Accordingly, no government, however tyrannical, can exist on purely violent means, because what is required to govern, in any form, is power based upon the organization of human beings (Arendt, 1970: 50). Arendt argues that; “Even the totalitarian ruler, whose chief instrument of rule is torture, needs a power basis—the secret police and its net of informers.” (Arendt, 1970: 50).

Arendt’s focus on the importance of organization for the actualization of power is reminiscent of Foucault’s account of governmentality in the sense that techniques of disciplinary power and biopower in modern societies organize human beings and their actions at the individual and population level. However, what Arendt draws attention to is the ways in which the human capacity for organization is a condition of collectively actualized power while also emphasizing that it is power that enables and supports human organization (Arendt, 1998: 201). The relationship between the human capacity for

organization and the expression of power is an important topic that will be discussed in more detail at a later point in this chapter.

As an individual my experience of power in the Arendtian sense is constrained by the existence of other people and the support offered by my relationship with them: yet the other side of this limitation of power is that power is also “boundless” -- a consequence of power being relational potentiality rather than a human property (Arendt, 1998: 201). Subsequently, power is also infinite in the sense that it can be divided, multiplied and transformed without being diminished (Arendt, 1998: 201).

In the context of lived experience, the character of power has important implications for the exercise of human agency embodying both limitations and possibilities. Action takes place in a space of inter-subjectivity where the support of others furthers the possibilities of individual achievements and where lack of support is an obstacle to the realization of one's goals. This is brought out in detail within Arendt's recognition of the power of the “non-violent resistance” adopted by Gandhi (Arendt, 1970: 53) and the Danish resistance to the deportation of the Jewish population in World War Two (Arendt, 1994a: 171-175). In these examples, what is emphasized is the power actualized through collective action: the potential inherent to human togetherness and cooperative action and the redundancy of material means and implements of violence for the actualization of power.

The distinction between violence and power is important for understanding the importance of power for the political realm, yet it is only one aspect of how Arendt

characterizes power. The fragility of power resides in the uncertainty and unreliability of human agreement (Arendt, 1998: 201) and the frailty of the realm of human affairs where action takes place (Arendt, 1998: 188-191). The character of power as a relational phenomenon of human inter-subjectivity is further emphasized by Arendt within her seminal work *The Human Condition*, where she defines power as:

...a power potential and not an unchangeable, measurable, and reliable entity like force or strength.... power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse. (Arendt, 1998: 200)

Power as “a potential” of human relationships emphasizes its independence from what Arendt calls “material factors”, or the notion that large numbers of people or substantial resources are necessary for the actualization of power (Arendt, 1998: 200). Yet power is not independent from limits that are inherent to the realm of human inter-subjectivity. Arendt’s account emphasizes that power is expressed through a particular kind of relationship between human beings whose coming together does not depend on social class, economic standing or material resources, but on something much more fundamental -- namely the will to live together (Arendt, 1998: 201). Human togetherness is the only material support required for the expression of power and where the power potential is not actualized it “passes away” (Arendt, 1998: 201). In order to

understand how human togetherness underpins power, it is important to understand exactly what Arendt means by togetherness.

## **POWER AND SOLIDARITY**

The kind of human togetherness that underpins action - and therefore power - is a togetherness that provides a foundation for a form of equality to arise between *un-equals* who have a world in common (Arendt, 1998: 214-215). This notion of in-equality refers to the many different positions within the world occupied by a diversity of individuals. For Arendt what connects and equalizes human beings in their diversity is not an affinity with each other based on our biological status as human beings, but rather a common orientation towards a public realm where we fully appear to each other (Arendt, 1998: 214-215). As Allen has (perceptively) argued, power is actualized through a form of human solidarity, grounded not upon a pre-existing shared identity, but on a cooperative commitment to act together for a common purpose (Allen, 1999: 109-110).

This kind of human solidarity is a form of human interaction that finds a world in common; what Lisa Disch (1995) recognizes as an expression of individual situatedness within the world:

.... constructing the “facts” of a contingent situation in a way that makes possible a coordinated response by a plurality of actors who - apart from that contingency - may have more differences than affinities. (Disch, 1995: 288)

Arendt makes an important distinction between the kind of human togetherness that represents this notion of solidarity and the kind of human associations that characterize ordinary societal interactions. This supports Arendt’s distinctive and complex account of the normalizing character of modern society and its implications for a public realm supportive of collective action. According to Canovan, when Arendt refers to society, she is identifying a particular form of human relationship characterized by conformity and recognition of shared biological needs (Canovan 1995: 117). Arendt emphasizes this type of relationship in her account of “the social” where formerly private activities and concerns rose to public prominence (Arendt, 1998: 38). For Arendt, the main danger of the rise of the social is the way it requires a set of behaviors that reflect a shared concern with matters of economics and the satisfaction of biological needs (Arendt, 1998: 39-40).

Conformity characterizes inter-subjective relations in the social realm, promoting what Arendt calls the “one-ness of man-kind”; the shared biological necessity that characterizes human life (Arendt, 1998: 45-46). Arendt argues that when society has taken over the public realm, a distorted form of action can give rise to a powerless kind of

power: one that cannot support the forms of human organization that give meaning to human life (Arendt, 1998: 201-202). An example of this would be the power that arises through individuals acting together to force others out of the public realm. As Arendt recognizes, this manifestation of power may include violent means as often power and violence appear together in the political realm (Arendt, 1970: 52). However, while power may have been actualized in the short term, the undermining of the public realm through the undermining of plurality will create a public realm in which not all can appear. The influence of Heidegger is important here in that Arendt takes up the notion that reality is disclosed within humanly created spaces: although for Arendt, it is a particular kind of public space that ensures appearance and reality (Canovan, 1995: 112). To be dispossessed of a space where one can appear to others is to be “deprived of reality” in the sense that the reality of the world is confirmed for each one of us by its commonality to others with whom we share the world (Arendt, 1998: 198-199).

Crucial for understanding what Arendt means by power is her emphasis on an organized public space that keeps power within a set of limits conducive to human wellbeing. As I signaled in Chapter Eight, this is significant because Arendt recognizes that power can be manifested through morally questionable forms of human togetherness (Arendt, 1998: 203). Remembering that power is theorized as a relational and boundless potentiality, the outcomes of concerted action can also be without clear boundaries and Arendt addresses the “enormous strength” and “resiliency” of action through re-emphasising the moral significance of the human condition of plurality as embodying

solutions to the dangers of action (Arendt, 1998: 237-238) Arendt admits that power without limits can overwhelm and devastate the very conditions that support human existence and she theorizes some moral limitations for power that emerge from the faculty of action itself, namely the capacity to forgive and to make and keep promises: moral “correctives” that have their source not in merely individual experience, but in inter-subjective experiences supported by human plurality (Arendt, 1998: 236-238).

The moral limitations of power bring to light the normative dimensions of Arendtian power. As collective forms of power have important implications for lived experience, I am concerned to establish whether Arendt’s account of power can decisively account for differences between collective forms of power that are conducive to human well-being and forms of power that emerge from human relationships that undermine freedom and agency. This is important in the context of understanding our moral responsibilities as beings-in-the-world who take up the responsibility of creating a shared world through acting collectively with others.

#### **THE NORMATIVE DIMENSIONS OF ARENTIAN POWER.**

The normative dimensions of Arendtian power have been articulated in the context of some objections leveled at Arendt’s account of the political realm and its



highly problematic relationship with morality<sup>31</sup>. One important aspect of the debate is represented by Allen (1999: 93-94) who argues that Arendt's account of power is inherently normative in its embodiment of a set of criteria that support its legitimacy. The legitimacy of power is obtained from the nature of the collective support that grounds it; the concerted, cooperative action that is the condition of its actualization (Allen, 1999: 98). Allen recognizes that the apparently normative character of Arendtian power is not without its issues, in the above stated sense that power can be actualized through collective actions that are morally problematic (Allen, 1999: 102-103). For example, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that "perverted forms of acting together" can manifest powerful forms of rule (mob rule or ochlocracy) that can overcome the strength of an individual and lead to inertia in the political sphere (Arendt, 1998: 203).

There is, however, some support for a normative dimension to Arendtian power in some characterizations offered by Arendt in her writing. Consider the following

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<sup>31</sup> George Kateb provides a well-argued case that Arendt's political theory is not grounded upon a clear moral/normative framework in his book *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil* (1984). Amy Allen (1999) and Margaret Canovan (1992) have both argued against aspects of his interpretation.

argument from *The Human Condition*:

Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities. (Arendt, 1998: 200)

For this characterization of power normative criteria are proposed, namely; a congruence between disclosure and action, a requirement for truth and goodness (no deeds of brutality), the disclosure of reality rather than a covering over (hypocrisy) and finally, a requirement for the kind of actions that are creative rather than destructive. While this would seem to support a case for a normative dimension to Arendtian power, it is important to understand the context of this statement and to consider how it fits within Arendt's other arguments concerning power. Arendt presents the above quotation in the context of an argument she is making about the role of power in supporting and maintaining the public realm.

The durability and stability of any public space is supported by power and what keeps people together in action and speech is the sense of a shared purpose, or as Arendt puts it:

Only where men live so close together that the potentialities of action are always present can power remain with them, and the foundation of cities, which as city-states have remained paradigmatic for all Western political organization, is therefore indeed the most important material pre-requisite for power.

(Arendt, 1998: 201)

As power supports the existence of a public sphere, the criteria outlined by Arendt, congruence between disclosure and action, truth, non-brutality, disclosure of reality over hypocrisy and creativity, can be understood as the moral implications of power for the character of the public realm. When the actualization of power is constitutive of a public realm of appearance, action and speech, it is precisely because it has embodied these criteria.

This interpretation of the normative implications of power aligns with other statements that Arendt makes about power, particularly in the context of explaining the combination of power and violence in politics. In *On Violence* for example, Arendt admits that power can support societies based upon domination (master over slave) and

other cruel and brutal regimes (totalitarianism) (Arendt, 1970: 50-51). This is in part explained by the following:

But the power structure itself precedes and outlasts all aims, so that power, far from being the means to an end, is actually the very condition enabling a group of people to think and act in terms of the means-ends category. (Arendt, 1970: 51)

Power as a relational capacity of human relationships, although disconnected from the outcomes of its exercise, is the condition that supports the possibility of collective speech and action.

As I have already emphasized, Arendt argues that as an end-in-itself power requires no justification, but legitimacy-- found in the coming together of the community of action and not connected to the actions that ensue, or their consequences (Arendt, 1970: 52). This implies that a normative dimension of Arendtian power can be found in the kinds of human togetherness that manifest power, as the particular content of the actions of a collective group who actualize power (and their consequences in the world), do not form part of power's legitimacy. Allen (2001: 142) argues that as Arendt theorizes power as a communicative relationship which is "an end in itself", relations of power are normatively positive. This has important consequences for Arendt's account of how power constitutes subjectivity and agency in that power's role in the creation of a public

space of appearance supports action and in turn the achievement of individuality (Allen, 2001: 138). I agree with Allen's interpretation of the normative status of Arendtian power in the sense that power's support of a space where we can fully appear and act with others reveals the role of power for human well-being. This confirms that although the power expressed through collective action could have morally questionable consequences, the creation of a space of appearance reveals that power is normatively positive because it supports the possibility that every human being can appear with others and in doing so can achieve an individual identity. The notion of legitimacy rests upon the idea that the political space created through action and speech depends upon human organization: the capacity to make an "explicit appearance" in a shared public space and to recognize the capacity of others to act in this space too (Arendt, 1998: 198-199).

While human togetherness supports the creation of a space of appearance and thus provides power with its legitimacy outside of the outcomes of our collective actions, our ordinary moral intuitions would support the idea that the content and outcomes of our actions are significant for understanding the relationship between power and lived experience. In my view, the notion of legitimacy allows Arendt to draw attention to the creation of a space where action can attain its fullest meaning, for better or worse. Arendt puts forward some safeguards of action in her account of the moral principles of forgiveness and promise keeping, which arise from the "...will to live with others in the mode of acting and speaking...", articulating them as restraints or limits upon the realm of human inter-subjectivity (Arendt, 1998: 245-246).

Arendt portrays promise keeping as an “island of certainty” within a realm of possibility, unpredictability, uncertainty and human freedom, arguing that the aim of this kind of restraint is never to control the future, but to provide some moral guideposts for human life and to bind people together (Arendt, 1998: 244). As with promise keeping, forgiveness also plays a role in the durability of the inter-subjective realm of action, in that to some degree it frees human beings from the long range outcomes and implications of their actions in the sense that every action has on-going and unknowable effects in the world over which the agent has little control (Arendt, 1998: 236-237). Promise keeping and forgiveness are put forward as moral activities arising from the character of human existence as being-in-the-world with others (Arendt, 1998: 238). Arendt emphasizes that the power manifested through action embodies dangers and risks that can only be countered within a public space of human inter-subjectivity, where human beings in their diversity can collectively commit to make and keep promises and to forgive the unintended outcomes of human action, as Arendt states:

Because the remedies against the enormous strength and resilience inherent in action processes can function only under the condition of plurality, it is very dangerous to use this faculty in any but the realm of human affairs (Arendt, 1998: 238)

This statement warns that the moral correctives of promise keeping and forgiveness have limits, specifically that the public realm must be a space of diversity where a plurality of perspectives and views are supported. This warning foreshadows some issues raised by George Kateb (1984: 35) concerning the adequacy of these inherent safeguards for dealing with the moral consequences of action (Kateb, 1984: 35). The problem is that a community of individuals bound by criminal behavior can forgive and keep promises, yet this does not provide a moral corrective for their possible actions (Kateb, 1984: 35). Indeed, Kateb highlights a problem that is not only relevant to Arendt's account of power, but one that can be applied to other relational accounts of power such as Foucault's. The issue is one of how we can make moral distinctions between different expressions of power, both individual and collective. The role of plurality in the public sphere of action is key to understanding the normative dimension of Arendtian power and its importance has important implications for Arendt's account of "the political". The moral safeguards that Arendt proposes as correctives of the dangers of action rest upon the private/public distinction which also informs Arendt's account of "the political". It is therefore important to examine Arendt's arguments concerning the moral consequences of the blurring of the social and the political in modern life.

## POWER AND THE POLITICAL

I will begin my discussion with two statements from Arendt on what constitutes the political realm. “Politics deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men. Men organize themselves politically according to certain essential commonalities found within or abstracted from an absolute chaos of differences.” (Arendt, 2005: 93). While this argument emphasizes the significance of plurality for politics, the following statement stresses the importance of human organization for the creation of a political realm:

The polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. (Arendt, 1998: 198)

Before engaging in depth with Arendt’s theorization of “the political”, it is important to draw attention to two premises that will inform my discussion of her work and which I hope to defend during the course of my enquiry. The first is the inseparability of Arendt’s account of power from her adoption of the private/public



distinction. As I briefly signaled in the previous section, the moral safeguards of promise keeping and forgiveness, and by extension power, are predicated upon a distinction between the private and the public realms.

The relationship between power and human lived experience cannot be fully articulated in isolation from Arendt's account of the political realm which is informed by the private/public distinction. Thus the second premise directly concerns Arendt's arguments about the content of an authentic politics. While there are clearly some aspects of Arendt's writing that appear to discount important aspects of human life from being authentically political, particularly her discussion of the rise of the social, there are other dimensions of her thought that lend themselves to a wider account of the political realm and this will embody implications for Arendt's account of power and its normative implications for human life. Despite these possible difficulties and with the assistance of some insightful contemporary interpretations of Arendt's account of "the political", I will cautiously argue for the empowering possibilities of forms of political action that are available to every human being in their everyday life.

## THE REQUIREMENTS OF POLITICAL ACTION

For Arendt, “the political” refers to an organized form of inter-subjective speech and action that arises between people in their creation of a worldly in-between space (Arendt, 1998: 198). Arendt argues that politics is not a capacity of the individual but an experience that arises from relationships between different individuals and is constitutive of a space of freedom (Arendt, 2005: 95). The key concern of politics is the existence of a world of things and human affairs that relate and separate individuals: a creation of human relationships and activities that provides the structure within which human lives are lived (Arendt, 2005: 106-107). The worldly in-between space as humanly created reality informs and mediates human lived experience, providing structure and permanence for human life while simultaneously subjecting human beings to the consequences of the upheavals, disasters and tragedies that take place within it (Arendt, 2005: 106-107).

A diversity of perspectives is the condition that allows each individual to grasp worldly reality which only reveals itself fully to men in the plural, not to man in the singular (Arendt, 2005: 128-129). Thus, the political realm is not limited to a formally established public space or governmental organization, as it depends for its existence only on a particular type of relationship between people. The relationship between “the public” and “the political” is highly complex from an Arendtian perspective and Arendt’s

writing suggests that what is considered authentically political has a higher standard than what can be considered ‘merely’ public.

The public realm as the space of appearance illuminates the meaning of human action, yet unless this realm is also a politically organized space it cannot survive the actuality of the deeds within it (Arendt, 2005: 122-123). Thus political organization ensures the durability of the public realm. Rather than equating the public with the political, Arendt argues that the political requires the support of the public realm to provide the conditions upon which political action can arise, or as Euben puts it, “Politics requires and presupposes the existence of a public realm...” (Euben, 2000: 155). Thus the public and political realms mutually condition each other, with political space arising from within the public realm and ensuring the durability of a public space which then provides the structure for political action. This picture of politics is reinforced by Arendt when she talks about the public realm as a “potential space of appearance” claiming that it is power that preserves the public realm *and* its capacity to sustain a political space (Arendt, 1998: 200). The public realm does not always necessarily fulfill its function of supporting a political realm of speech and action, particularly when public space is mainly social and thus characterized by behavior and conformity rather than spontaneous action (Arendt, 1998: 134).

Arendt emphasizes that the political realm is founded on the idea that we “produce equality through organization”, which ensures that everyone can act with others in equality within a world held in common (Arendt, 1994b: 301). Arendt connects

equality not with justice but with the notion of freedom in the sense that we all have an identical right to political activity, which in the context of Ancient Greece meant free speech in the space of the polis (Arendt, 2005: 118).<sup>32</sup> Thus equality outside of a political space is meaningless in that equality rests on the uniqueness of human beings which is only visible when shown against the background of a plurality of others who live together in political organization (Arendt, 2005: 67-68).

In the context of the ways in which political participation is an important part of a meaningful human life, power has an important role in keeping open a space where political action remains a possibility over time. For Arendt, significant human experiences are supported and in many ways guaranteed by the existence of an authentic political realm. The actualization of power through collective action supports individuals to co-create a political space within which their actions attain their fullest meaning and in this context it is necessary to examine what constitutes an authentic political realm via a discussion of the difference between “the social” and “the political”.

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<sup>32</sup> There are some obvious problems with Arendt’s adoption of the Greek polis as a model for what constitutes the political, notably the exclusion of women, non-citizens and slaves from public life. According to Canovan, Arendt used the model of the polis to explain the difference between private and public and not in terms of proposing a model of politics for modern society (Canovan, 1995: 115-116). Arendt acknowledges the virtues of Roman politics and she also admits that that the Ancient Greeks “sacrificed the private to the public” (Arendt, 1998: 59).

## THE SOCIAL AND THE POLITICAL

Arendt makes an important and controversial distinction between what can be considered under the domain of social concerns and what can be understood in terms of authentic politics. It is in Arendt's discussion of the ancient Greek polis that she characterizes the social realm in terms of necessity in opposition to the political realm as the home of freedom (Arendt, 1998: 30). It is the bounds that Arendt sets for encompassing the authentically political realm and her judgments concerning non-political phenomena which has proved most controversial for her readers in that Arendt has provided a harsh assessment of that which is non-political (Kateb, 1984: 1-3). However, it is not clear that Arendt's concerns with non-political activities necessarily commits her to a narrow conception of what can be understood as constitutive of the political. This issue is what motivates Hannah Pitkin (1981) to analyze Arendt's political theory in order to provide a wider and more inclusive interpretation of Arendt's political realm. <sup>33</sup>This analysis is based on the notion that "the social" and "the political" are particular human attitudes adopted in response to the world (Pitkin, 1981: 342). The merits of Pitkin's analysis are that under her interpretation, the notion of the political as a

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<sup>33</sup> For an interesting debate on the concerns raised by Pitkin, see Margaret Canovan's (1982) response to Pitkin's analysis and also James Knauer's (1983) response to Canovan.

form of attitude allows Pitkin to pursue a line of thought that helps to illuminate the complex relationship between the social and the political in Arendt's writing.

Pitkin asks:

Could one, for instance, acknowledge the centrality of economic and social issues in public life without reducing political freedom to either mere competitive maneuvering for private profit or a mere by-product of some inevitable social process?  
(Pitkin, 1981: 343)

What Pitkin argues is that the connection between the social and political is meaningful rather than the separation between them (Pitkin, 1981: 343-346). Ultimately for Pitkin it is not the admittance of social concerns into the political realm that is dangerous, but the failure to provide social questions with a political form so they can be addressed in the right way (Pitkin, 1981: 346). This requires a principle such as justice, which can make the transition between the private individual and their interests to the public citizen and the collective concern (Pitkin, 1981: 347). According to Pitkin's interpretation of justice and its role in the political realm, it is a principle that is closely aligned with citizenship. This is important in terms of our responsibilities as citizens to collectively assume responsibility for those aspects, practices and forces within the social realm that condition, shape and limit our lives (Pitkin, 1981: 344).

However, in reviewing Arendt's own thoughts on the role of justice in the political realm, it can be seen that while justice is understood as a principle to inspire action, if understood as a goal of political action or an end of politics, it would mean the destruction of politics once the goal or end was achieved as Arendt states:

It would also follow that political action would cease once its end is achieved, and that politics in general--if it is nothing more than the proper, that is, expedient, means for achieving the non-political ends that are its *raison d'être* - will at some point disappear entirely from human history. (Arendt, 2005: 194)

For Arendt, the meaning of the political realm consists solely in its status as a realization of freedom; it is not a means to secure freedom nor is it an instrument of justice (Arendt, 2005: 129). Pitkin's modification of Arendt's political realm to encompass a more central role for justice provides a theorization of the relationship between the social and the political that tries to widen Arendt's political realm at the cost of undermining the significant role played by the private/public distinction in Arendt's political thought<sup>34</sup>. From an Arendtian perspective, the public/private distinction operates

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<sup>34</sup> I would like to acknowledge the useful comments made by Paul Formosa on this topic.

to make us aware of the dangers of allowing private concerns of self-interest, behaviorism and conformity into the public space where human action attains its meaning. While this is the role that the private/public distinction plays in Arendt's account of the political, the exact model upon which Arendt's understanding of the social and the political is based is open to debate.

Arendt makes references to classical Greece and ancient Rome in her discussion of the private/public distinction in *The Human Condition*, arguing that while the ancient Greeks elevated the public over the private, the Romans accepted the necessity of a co-existence between these two spheres of life (Arendt, 1998: 59). Arendt's comments in this regard implies that she too recognized the practical implications of a strict separation between private and public life. Canovan (1995: 115) argues that in her study of human experience within *The Human Condition*, Arendt did not adopt the Greek model of the "the political" per se, but referred to the Ancient Greek distinction between private and public in order to focus our attention on the significance of plurality and the implications and dangers associated with the elevation of the social in modern life.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> It is important to emphasize that Canovan argues that *The Human Condition* was not "...concerned so much with politics as with the predicament from which politics must start." (Canovan, 1995: 99-100). Thus Canovan recognizes that the concern was to draw attention to the human activities that influence politics and human political life (Canovan, 1995: 101).



Jacques Taminiaux (2000) and Roy Tsao (2002) also directly question the extent to which the model of the ancient Greek polis influenced Arendt's theorization of the political realm. Taminiaux argues against those interpretations of Arendt's theory of action which over-emphasize the centrality of the performative aspects of action that align her to a comprehensive adoption of the Greek Polis as her political model (Taminiaux, 2000: 165). Roy Tsao draws on Taminiaux's framework to support his own particular refutation of the idea that Arendt modeled her notion of the political realm on the Ancient Greek polis. Tsao argues that Arendt employs the Greek model as a contrast to her own account of the political, where, rather than trying to provide a strict classification of human activity, Arendt offers a series of "discrete abstractions" from the larger context of our experience (Tsao, 2002: 99 & 101).

As Taminiaux and Tsao would have it, the traditional view that the Greek model of politics has been adopted by Arendt is a misconception that has rendered her social/political distinction problematic. Tsao's interpretation of *The Human Condition* rejects the notion that Arendt accepted the Greek polis as an ideal for her account of political realm, arguing that her critique of modern society is not based on the strict separation of the political from the non-political, but is concerned with the modern tendency to structure our political realm around the activity of labor (Tsao, 2002: 109 & 117). Canovan too argues that for Arendt society represents a particular form of social relation that promotes economic relations and conformity to the detriment of plurality,

which reduces human beings to being merely members of a species and which chips away at the human world we have created (Canovan, 1995: 117-119).

While we must labor to survive (or compel others to labor for us), this does not reveal who we are as action does and if we refrain from action, we miss an opportunity to reveal who we are and we fail to live a life that is fundamentally human: that is a life lived with others (Arendt, 1998: 176). What is at stake for Arendt is freedom and our capacity to create a web of relationships through actualizing our freedom in the public realm and it is the web of relationships that connects human beings to each other in ways that ensures mutual appearance and thus reality (Arendt, 1998: 233-235).

## **FREEDOM**

For Arendt, to be free is to experience the world and this is realized through the constitution of a political space where reality is constituted by human plurality (Arendt, 2005: 128-130). This emphasizes that the experience of freedom is inseparable from the capacity of human beings to create, occupy and sustain a political space, thus politics and freedom are identical in the sense that freedom is ‘...the substance and meaning of all things political’ (Arendt, 2005: 129). “Freedom as an inner capacity of man is identical to the capacity to begin, just as freedom as a political reality is identical with a space of movement between men.” (Arendt, 1994b: 473). In this statement Arendt explicitly

makes a distinction between the capacity of human beings to make new beginnings, and the actualization of freedom in the world. Arendt draws attention to the notion of political freedom in ancient Greece, where the polis embodied the equality of a “body of peers”, all of whom were free (Arendt, 1965: 23). Equality was not a condition of birth but something that emerged artificially from the institution of the polis, a political space where freedom was also achieved as an outcome of inter-subjective relations (Arendt, 1965: 23).

In this context, Arendt makes an important distinction between liberation as a condition of freedom and freedom as a political way of life. Freedom is “admission to the public realm” and “participation in public affairs”, which of course requires liberation understood as “absence of restraint” and “freedom of movement”, in order to exist at all (Arendt, 1965: 24-25). Liberation is achieved through mastering necessity, which for Arendt is more tyrannical than any ruler, as to be ruled by the needs of the body and their overwhelming urgency, undermines the possibility of actualizing freedom (Arendt, 1965: 54). Most importantly, Arendtian freedom is not a matter for the human will, nor is it a withdrawal into isolation away from politics, but rather is the expression of human natality, of new beginnings and action (Arendt, 2005: 113-114). Consequently, Arendt’s notion of freedom refers to a freedom within the world of others, requiring the plurality of the public realm (Arendt, 2003: 440-442).

Freedom creates the web of human relationships, yet the way we exercise our freedom is conditioned by an already existing web into which we act (Arendt, 1998: 233-

234). As beings-in-the-world we are limited and empowered by our relationships with others and this is reflected within Arendt's account of freedom. While being-in-the-world implies being-with-others and thus a life lived in the community of other people, Arendt's account of political community has strict conditions. Arendt argues that not every form of community embodies freedom and that living together is not enough to ensure the conditions for freedom to flourish (Arendt, 1968: 148-149). What is required is the organization of the public space into a political community where individuals can appear to each other as actors (Arendt, 1968: 154). Thus freedom in the worldly sense in which Arendt theorizes it is always a mode of human togetherness that can only develop under worldly conditions that are conducive to human creativity (Arendt, 1994: 473).

Arendt's interpretation of freedom is necessarily bound to power in that freedom requires a public space where human beings can act with others (Birmingham, 2006: 54-55). This emphasizes freedom as a freedom to move within the world, in the sense that freedom requires a public space in order to be actualized (Birmingham, 2006: 60-62). Freedom and politics are conditions of possibility for each other, in the sense that freedom is a phenomenon of a politically constituted public space of action and speech and politics arises only in a space characterized by freedom (Arendt, 2003: 442-443). In her Lessing address in *On Humanity in Dark Times*, Arendt makes clear her concern with a modern understanding of human freedom as occupying a contrasting space in opposition to the world: an understanding that has encouraged the modern individual to retreat and neglect their responsibilities to the world (Arendt, 1995: 12-13). For Arendt,

the notion of freedom that characterizes modern western society has undermined the in-between space that exists between people, undermining our commitment towards sustaining the inter-subjective world (Arendt, 1995: 12-13).

Arendt argues that while freedom can only be experienced through our relation with the outer world and cannot be experienced purely in the relationship of oneself to oneself, traditional philosophical thought has displaced the notion of freedom from the political domain of human experience to the inner realm of the subject (Arendt, 1968: 144-146). For Arendt this re-location of freedom from the realm of experience to the exclusively inner realm grounds a “politically irrelevant” and world-less freedom that ultimately undermines the human capacity to organize a meaningful political space (Arendt, 1968: 146-147).

For Arendt, the full disclosure of individual identity through action in a public space is the premier attainment of human beings, and the aim of politics should be to support this opportunity (Canovan, 1995: 135). Without disclosing who one is in a public space an individual cannot fully reveal themselves as distinct members of a human community: through our actions we “insert ourselves into the human world” where we make a new beginning with others (Arendt, 1998: 176-177). This means that the aim of politics is to ensure that there can be a political realm, or as Canovan identifies “Underlying the formal constitution of the body politic is the ‘space of appearance’, while the function of political power is to keep that space in being.” (Canovan, 1995: 135). The space in which we disclose our identity before others is the public/political

realm, without which we would be confined to the realm of private life. As Arendt argues, a life lived completely outside the public space of appearance is a life deprived of reality and of its fullest meaning (Arendt, 1998: 58).

## **POWER AND IDENTITY**

Arendt's account of political action emphasizes the notion of human identity as performative (Kateb, 1977: 150; Honig, 1995: 149; Allen, 1999: 92). By performance Arendt refers to the human capacity to take up their agency within a world and to be linked with their actions. Arendt emphasizes the risks of performance in the sense that we disclose our identities to others while we ourselves cannot have a complete understanding of what we disclose (Arendt, 1998: 179-180). Arendt argues that the "who" that appears to others can never be fully visible to the actor and requires the presence of others for its revelation (Arendt, 1998: 179-180). The notion of being-in-the-world with others is highly relevant here, as what is implied by Arendt's arguments is that self-understanding is a function of our relations with others in the world. As Heidegger has argued, "Being-with is an attribute of one's own Das-sein". (Heidegger, 1996, 26: 113). The implications of Heidegger's argument that self-understanding is inter-subjectively achieved are associated with our capacity to live authentic lives (Mulhall, 2005; 66-67). The problem of the meaning of human life also informs Arendt's account although it is taken up in a

different way. For Arendt, it is only through performing our identity in a public realm with others that we can find meaning in the context of creating a world where our actions will form a meaningful story that will endure long after our own mortal lives (Arendt, 1998: 183-185).

For Arendt, the disclosure of human identity through action in a space of appearance is the human response to the condition of natality (Arendt, 1998: 177). For Allen however, Arendt's account of identity holds that identity is not only performed through action, but also partly *created* through action:

... although power emerges out of individuals acting together, it also *makes possible* such collective action by providing the space within which such actions can be carried out. And, insofar as power is constitutive of public space, it also serves as a precondition for agency, since one's identity as an actor can only be fully achieved through action in public. (Allen, 2001: 138)

The implication of identity as performative in the sense of being constituted by action is that political action provides the foundation for self-understanding, or as Judith Butler expresses it in terms of the performativity of gender, "That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality." (Butler, 2006: 185). From Butler's Foucauldian perspective,

performativity is grounded upon the notion of the subject as historically constituted, thus if identity is constituted by being performed through action rather than revealed through action, it can always be performed differently. If identity is performed rather than revealed, then there is no pre-existing identity; a notion which opens up many possibilities for performing different and novel identities (Butler, 2006: 192). According to Honig (1995: 149), performativity and agonism are closely connected within Arendt's account of politics, understood as a space where a community is formed rather than one that expresses shared identities already constituted within the social or private realms.

Thus what is most important from an Arendtian perspective is that the identity we achieve through public performance communicates our uniqueness as individuals and reveals the possibilities for building political communities: we answer the question of who we are when we act with others (Arendt, 1998: 178) and in this sense we find meaning in a political community. It is through power that we are able to organize a political space where the disclosure of our unique identities have worldly consequences. Power is what preserves the public space within which we can act with others and it is the power of collective action that ensures the organization of a space of politics (Arendt, 1998: 200-201). Thus the normative dimension of power is connected to its role in the creation and preservation of a space where we can appear in a community where our actions matter.



## **ARENDTIAN POWER AND LIVED EXPERIENCE: SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS**

At the beginning of Section Three I offered the following preliminary definition of Arendtian power:

Power is a relational phenomenon expressed through a form of inter-subjective human agency that depends upon diversity (plurality), individuality (uniqueness) and solidarity (togetherness based upon human plurality). It both conditions and is conditioned by, a humanly constructed public space of equality and freedom. Power is worldly and illuminative of the hidden potential of human being.

After examining the key concepts that underpin Arendt's account of power, I would now like to examine whether my initial definition of Arendtian power fully reflects the complexity of Arendt's perspective.

As I emphasized at the beginning of my discussion the activities and conditions of labor/life, work/worldliness and action/plurality do not embody limitations on individual agency, but are the underlying conditions for the actualization of power. The activity of

labor sustains life, work creates a world of things that give permanence to human existence and action creates a web of relationships within which human beings disclose their unique identities. Power supports the achievement of human meaning in the world through constituting a space where the *who-ness* of human *being* can appear. The disclosure of unique individuality within a world that is always-already there supports a story of a new beginner to emerge (Arendt, 1998: 184). The reality of the world is secured by our capacity to appear and act with others as is our own reality as distinct and unique persons (Canovan, 1995: 134). Such is the importance of power.

While power was found to be a relational phenomenon of the inter-subjective realm, Arendt's account of the kinds of inter-subjective relations that actualize power was complex. Power is actualized through forms of human togetherness characterized by a shared relationship to the world in common (Arendt, 1998: 214-215). These kinds of human interaction embody mutual recognition of equality and mutual recognition of difference and are not prompted not by the demands of biological necessity but by a choice to act with others towards a shared common end. Thus power is a relational phenomenon of a *humanly constituted* realm of inter-subjectivity or as Arendt states it, a world created through human activity (Arendt, 1998: 9). This world stretches beyond the life span of any one human being, reminding us "...that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin something new. (Arendt, 2003: 181).

While my preliminary definition noted that power is expressed through inter-subjective human agency, it did not reflect the importance of the human condition of

nativity as a pre-condition for power. Nativity-as the capacity for human beings to make a new beginning through action-suggests something completely new and uncaused, what Arendt calls ‘startling unexpectedness’ associated with the uniqueness of every human being and the possibilities for action to interrupt the everyday processes of nature and history (Arendt, 1998: 178). The concept of nativity plays an important role in the possibility of actualizing power through concerted action, informing Arendt’s particular interpretation of what it means to live in a world of others and the possibilities that come with disclosing our own particular identity (Arendt, 1998: 176-178).

While nativity was described as the general condition grounding human action, plurality as the specific condition of action ensures that action is meaningful in terms of the way it connects diverse individuals (Arendt, 1998: 8-9). The importance of human uniqueness and diversity is embodied within Arendt’s account of plurality as revealing the full meaning of the world in its disclosure of its many subjective dimensions (Arendt, 1998: 199). As I emphasized at the beginning of Chapter Eight, the objectivity of the world is ensured through the subjective experiences of the many who are present to each other (Arendt, 1998: 198-199). Indeed, plurality is important in the context of moral forms of human togetherness that embody recognition of both equality and distinction (Arendt, 1998: 175-176; Canovan, 1995: 190-191). The many opinions and perspectives that arise from a plurality of human beings illuminate the world in its many dimensions, allowing every human being the opportunity to understand the meaning of human affairs in all its complexity (Canovan, 1995: 227).

While power is conditioned by plurality, natality and human togetherness, power is also the condition that underpins the space of appearance where plurality, natality and human solidarity attain their meaning. According to Arendt, the space of appearance that is actualized whenever human beings are with each other in action and speech is kept in existence through power (Arendt, 1998: 199-200). The power of collective action supports political bodies to stay together through their shared relationship to the world, sustaining the realm of appearance, as a space of potential power and a space of potential politics, open to every human being. Power also guarantees the possibility of freedom and individuals can only experience freedom within a world that is open to not only human diversity, but also to change. As Arendt sees it, freedom requires an experience of the world in its reality and this is only possible where human beings create a political space characterized by human plurality (Arendt, 2005: 128-130).

Now that I have examined Arendt's account of power in more detail, I am in a much better position to provide a more nuanced characterization of Arendtian power and its implications for lived experience.

*Power is a relational phenomenon actualized through a form of human togetherness that embraces plurality and supports the possibility of new beginnings (natality) through collective action. As a relational potential, power is conditioned by particular limitations that are grounded*

*by the conditions of human existence and the inter-subjective character of human life underpins power's legitimacy. Power has a normative dimension in its creation and support of a space of human togetherness. Power and freedom are mutually intertwined, conditioning each other and acting together as guarantees of the continuing existence of an authentic political realm.*

Arendt's account of power is highly complex and this slightly more developed characterization does not capture every possible aspect of power's importance for human lived experience. What the above characterization does offer however, is an interpretation of Arendtian power that will help shed light on aspects of power in Cabramatta that are yet to be fully addressed. The aim of the following Chapter is to apply Arendt's insights on power to particular aspects of the story of power in Cabramatta in order to reveal important aspects of the experience of power that cannot be accounted for from within a strictly Foucauldian framework.

## **Chapter Ten: Arendtian Perspectives on Cabramatta**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this Chapter is to examine the practical implications of Arendt's account of the relationship between power and lived experience, through a re-consideration of the case of Cabramatta. From within an Arendtian inspired framework, I will focus on the possibilities of power as constitutive of authentic political spaces. This is a dimension not fully addressed from my Foucauldian analysis of Cabramatta and one that is important to revealing the full complexity of the relationship between power and lived experience.

In articulating 1990s Cabramatta as a domain of power, freedom and possibility, my Foucauldian analysis theorized a social-political space of discursive practices where individual subjectivity was constituted. The Cabramatta community lived not only with the consequences of a public realm undermined by issues of drug related crime, but also with negative media representations that shaped their subjectivities. Supported by a complex understanding of freedom, Foucauldian power revealed Cabramatta's social spaces as sites of subjection and empowerment and spaces where resistance and self-constitution remained an ever-present possibility.

Despite the benefits of Foucault's insights on power for understanding the way that power mediated the lived experience of the Cabramatta community, my Foucauldian analysis did not fully address the possibilities associated with the kind of collective power that emerged from cooperative political action. While my Foucauldian analysis shed light on the intricate workings of power through discourse and social practices, what was left largely unaccounted for were the ways in which the power of collective action helped the community to make a new beginning in the worldly sense of the term. This is where Arendt's insights on power can be helpful in that she offers a contrasting perspective that takes into account the importance of political community for keeping us connected to the web of relationships (the world) in which our actions attain their highest meaning. We experience the world in its objective reality through sharing it with others who each have their own distinct and unique perspectives and who appear to us as we appear to them in speech and action (Arendt, 2005: 128). Through the power of collective action, we not only create a political community but a shared worldly space that gives meaning to our actions and provides a durable home for the realm of human affairs (Arendt, 1998: 204).

Arendt articulates the ways in which power supports individuals to achieve a political identity through inter-subjective relations that embody mutual recognition of equality and distinction. Arendt's account is characterized by her commitment to the possibility of an "authentic politics, which itself is informed by recognition of the importance of the private/public divide. The most well recognized issue associated with

Arendt's theorization of the political in the literature is her lack of recognition of the role of power in everyday social relations: a problem associated with Arendt's account of the private/public distinction. My Foucauldian analysis has demonstrated the significance of power in the social realm and my own view is that the experience of power is not confined to any one sphere of human life. However, the conceptual distinction between what is private/social and what is public/political can be helpful in further illuminating the empowering possibilities associated with collective and cooperative forms of power, while also increasing our understanding of the dangers of worldlessness.

As my thesis aims to achieve a more detailed understanding of the many ways that power shapes human existence, it is crucial to articulate not only the implications of the role of power in the constitution of individual subjectivity, but to also uncover the possibilities of power expressed through collective action. The content that I will explore in this chapter will further support the arguments in my final chapter where I will argue that Foucault's and Arendt's theories mutually imply each other and where I will set out a wider and more unified theoretical framework of power



## **AN ARENDTIAN ANALYSIS OF POWER IN CABRAMATTA**

My Foucauldian analysis of power relations illuminated in detail the implications of the socio-political responses to Cabramatta's crime and drug problems. At the end of Section Two, I discussed some limitations of Foucault's account of power, namely that it does not embody an explicit normative framework upon which to ground moral judgments concerning human interaction and that Foucault's focus on the possibilities of individual self-constitution prevented him from fully developing an account of the importance of the power associated with collective action. In relation to my Foucauldian analysis of Cabramatta, I explained that from a purely Foucauldian perspective and without a clear account of what constitutes human well-being, it is difficult to make moral distinction between different forms of resistance (those that lead to a further marginalization of subjectivity and those which overcome it). While Foucault emphasizes our responsibility to resist, he does not explicitly link this with an account of what would constitute a meaningful or good life.

The other limitation for Foucauldian power I examined was Foucault's focus on the self at the expense of recognizing the political possibilities of collective politics. In the context of Cabramatta, the empowering possibilities and actualities associated with a collectively realized forum such as the Inquiry could not be fully articulated from a purely Foucauldian perspective.

What is largely absent from my Foucauldian analysis of power in Cabramatta is an account of the importance and implications of the power of collective political action in the context of human well-being. Through an Arendtian analysis of Cabramatta that focuses on the possibilities of collectively realized power and recognizes the dangers of worldlessness for human well-being, a fuller picture of the relationship between power and lived experience can be realized. As I explained in Chapter Nine, Arendt argues that power is not actualized through social relations, but through a political form of human togetherness or solidarity that requires the publicity and plurality of the public realm. The public realm grounds the possibility of a kind of collective human organization that constitutes an authentic political space of shared meaning within which human beings can publicly appear in equality and distinction.

Arendt's alternative approach to power can provide a more detailed account of the possibilities associated with human solidarity in Cabramatta. My previous recounting of the story of Cabramatta emphasized that the character of its public, social and private spaces were significantly undermined as a result of the drug and crime issues experienced in its recent history. It is highly noteworthy, however, that despite the drug related crime problems that formed part of everyday life, Cabramatta was also a unique community characterized by a diversity of individuals from many cultures who, despite their differences, lived together in a significant degree of harmony (Legislative Council, 2001: 7). Cabramatta was also home to a large number of voluntary civic associations whose aim was to promote collective participation and well-being (Legislative Council, 2001: 7)

The community itself, including high profile community representatives and political leaders, had also spoken out many times against the conditions of their public spaces via the media and other political channels.

The Inquiry into Policing in Cabramatta can be understood as an authentic political space which played a considerable role in bringing to light the possibilities embodied by the power of collective action. The following analysis of Arendtian power in Cabramatta will discuss the impact and the significance of the Inquiry in terms of how it provided a domain where the experiences of the community could attain a public face. By recognizing the implications of Cabramatta's drug and crime problems for the community as a whole, and by providing a forum within which individuals could appear in equality and distinction, the Inquiry offered more than a set of recommendations towards a solution for Cabramatta's problems and an opportunity to reveal the plurality of the community. It also supported the possibilities of collective political action for those formerly rendered "world-less" by the destruction of their public spaces.

## THE COSTS OF WORLDLESSNESS IN CABRAMATTA

I will begin my discussion of wordlessness with a quote taken from the parliamentary report on the findings of the Inquiry into Policing.

For much of the last decade Cabramatta has been synonymous with drugs and drug-related crime. This perception is based on reality, even though there is much more to Cabramatta than its crime problem. Residents of Cabramatta have endured daily scenes that would be completely unacceptable to people living in other parts of Sydney. This inquiry has heard demands that the children of Cabramatta be able to play in parks without coming across the bodies of overdose victims and finding used syringes near their play equipment; that residents be able to walk out of the train station without being offered drugs and that ordinary families can stop living as prisoners in apartment blocks that are controlled by drug dealers. These are not unreasonable demands. (Legislative Council, 2001: 11)

This extract from the Report explicitly emphasizes the high social and personal costs of the undermining of Cabramatta's public, social and private spaces. Due to the

problems experienced in the central business district and surrounding residential areas, there were considerable implications for the quality of everyday life in the community. What is only implicit in this statement, however, is the high political price paid by individuals who were rendered world-less by the undermining of their public spaces. Remembering the meaning of Arendt's account of what it means to be world-less in practical terms, this excerpt from the *Inquiry* draws attention to what was lost in terms of a space where individuals could act and speak together as a political community.

From an Arendtian perspective, one of the highest costs associated with the loss of a fully functioning public realm is the damage done to the in-between space of human inter-subjectivity where individuals disclose their equality and distinctiveness and make their mark on the world. For Arendt, the central function of public space is to illuminate the shared reality of the "irreplaceable in-between" that develops between human beings in their togetherness (Arendt, 1995: 4-5). When the public realm has lost this illuminating power, human beings become isolated and start to demand less of public and political life, hoping only for the limited protection of individual liberty and non-interference in the pursuit of necessary interests (Arendt, 1995:11). For Arendt, the political realm should offer more than this, in that it should provide a literal and metaphorical space for action and freedom.

In Chapter Nine I discussed Arendt's account of "the political" in terms of a particular collective experience where a concern for the shared world takes center stage. The shared world in this sense is the in-between space that forms between human beings

who relate to each other in ways that promote distinction and equality. Politics is that which occurs in the in-between space that arises between a plurality of human beings and in this sense it is artificial but not *made* (Canovan, 1995: 208). This perspective emphasizes the political as a specific experience of freedom that arises only from a particular mode of inter-subjective relationship (Arendt, 2005: 95).

### ***Civic Practices***

A particularly helpful way of understanding the powerful possibilities associated with collective political action is through the importance of what Eliasoph calls “civic practices” (Eliasoph, 1996: 263). Civic practices illuminate to questioning different aspects of human experience and embody:

*...the fundamentally sociable processes by which citizens create contexts for political conversation in the potential public sphere, by jointly creating a relationship to speech itself. In creating these contexts, citizens develop meaning-making powers together. (Eliasoph, 1996: 263)*

The notion of civic practices can be helpful in understanding how individuals in Cabramatta were empowered through their participation in collective forms of politics.

The notion of civic practices mirrors Arendt's account of "the political" in that the political realm is constituted whenever people come together with others in action and speech to constitute a space supportive of the appearance of every individual as a distinct and unique person (Arendt, 1998: 198-199). This relates closely to the notion that civic practices create "meaning-making powers" in the sense that it is through speaking and acting together that we constitute a meaningful relationship to the world. As Eliasoph argues the power of civic practices is the power "to create the public itself" but the power of talking together to create meaning also supports the emergence of other forms of power that either contest existing practices or lend support to them (Eliasoph, 1996: 263-264).<sup>36</sup>

When human beings are prevented from appearing to others, are unable to collectively create a public/political space through isolation, or when the physical and figurative public spaces within a community do not support human action, individuals are

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<sup>36</sup> In a footnote Eliasoph acknowledges that Arendt makes a distinction between power as an end in itself and instrumental forms of power (Eliasoph, 1996: 264). What I find interesting in the context of *civic practices* is that it provides an apparent connection between Arendt's account of the relationship between power and politics and Foucault's account of power relations in the social realm through its recognition of these two forms of power. In Chapter Eleven I examine the ways in which Arendt's and Foucault's accounts of power mutually imply each other in the context of how their individual accounts of power can be articulated as parts of a more unified theoretical framework of power.

at risk of losing their connection to the web of relationships: what Arendt refers to in terms of worldlessness. For Arendt, estrangement from the world has implications for the actualisation of political freedom which depends upon a political space within which human action is meaningful (Arendt, 1968: 146). In practical terms, we can experience freedom only within our relationships with others in a space of equality (Arendt, 2005: 117), that supports each of us to distinguish ourselves through our actions. As I argued in Chapter Nine freedom is a politically actualised reality that is supported by an individual's relationship to a world of others, or as Arendt puts it "Freedom as a demonstrable fact and politics coincide and are related to each other like two sides of the same matter." (Arendt, 1968: 149).

In the case of Cabramatta, it is not that members of the community lost their capacity for political action--as natal beings we all have a gift for freedom and for making new beginnings in the world--but that the character of many of their public spaces were not supportive of human plurality, natality nor human togetherness in the political sense that Arendt theorizes it. Public spaces that do not guarantee the mutual appearance of individuals in their plurality cannot fully support the kind of human togetherness or solidarity that actualizes power and creates and sustains a humanly created world of shared meaning. It is this shared human world that provides the commonality between distinct human beings so that collective action is possible without eliminating difference. When any perspective upon the world is lost, part of the world's reality and objectivity is also lost, leading to an impoverished world (Arendt, 2005: 175-



176). Worldlessness renders individuals all the same, covering over their distinctness and at the same time undermining their equality: what makes us equal is that we are unique in our human *being* (Arendt, 2005: 176). Arendt argues that politics is concerned with plurality and diversity and that political organization depends upon finding a common ground based on an “absolute chaos of differences” (Arendt, 2005: 93).

The undermining of Cabramatta’s physical public spaces had significant implications for the community in the context of rendering the community effectively world-less in the sense of being isolated, unable to appear with others in a safe public space, confined to their homes and defined as individuals in terms of negative stereotypes. The situation in Cabramatta negatively impacted the opportunities for individuals to associate together, to form political communities of action and to create a worldly space where their actions and freedom could have meaningful consequences.

For Arendt, the public sphere does not become a political space until it is bounded by limits that provide it with a guarantee of durability-- a polis created intentionally to capture the public space within it in order to preserve a domain where human beings can appear to each other in their equality (Arendt, 2005: 123). As political space can exist at any location whenever human beings come together in speech and action (Arendt, 1998: 198), the deliberate actions of human beings to appear with others and to recognise the appearance of others is constitutive of a political realm. I would argue that *The Inquiry into Policing* fulfilled this function in Cabramatta by providing a platform where the

community and their perspectives could appear in their plurality. Thus the Inquiry must be considered a political space in the Arendtian sense of the word.

The importance of this for Cabramatta should not be under-estimated. The world is more than the humanly created space between human beings who act together, it is a home for mortal human beings who live their life within it and whose actions are meaningful in relation to it (Arendt, 1998: 173-174). Whenever people are deprived of the opportunity to appear in public and to have their opinions heard and their actions recognized, there is a high cost to pay in terms of freedom and the empowerment that comes from acting with others. Without authentically political spaces, human beings are deprived of a realm where full appearance is inter-subjectively guaranteed, where worldly reality is guaranteed and where a political identity is achieved (Arendt, 1998: 198-199). To occupy an authentically political space is to appear before others in our uniqueness and equality, to recognize the reality of the world in all its dimensions and to be able to act within it in a meaningful way.

## **THE INQUIRY INTO CABRAMATTA POLICING: A WORLDLY SPACE OF COLLECTIVE POLITICS.**

It is important to explain what the Inquiry achieved as an authentic political space of human collective action, to demonstrate how the activities of the Inquiry supported individuals in the community to achieve political identities and how the collective action of members of the community created new meanings. The Inquiry as an authentic political space of appearance helped to overcome the worldlessness that characterized the community in its isolation, both through the conditions of their public spaces and as a result of the negative discourses that associated issues of crime and race. It constituted a public worldly space that helped to reveal another dimension to understanding the reality of Cabramatta as well as contributing to efforts to address negative stereotypes. The Inquiry offered hope to the community in terms of prompting legislation to respond to drug related crime and it represented a form of civic practice in its support for the co-creation of shared meaning.

## THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INQUIRY

The Inquiry was structured upon the concerns that arose from community consultation and public submissions. Submissions were sought through advertisements placed in leading newspapers, Fairfield newspapers and Chinese and Vietnamese language press and through approaches to a range of community organizations and leaders within the Cabramatta community (Legislative Council, 2001:1).<sup>37</sup> Thus there was a clear attempt to ensure that the content of the Inquiry was shaped by a wide range of concerns and that submissions were received from a diverse range of individuals. It is significant that in attempting to reach members of the community who could not speak English and in allowing submissions to be made in a confidential manner, the Inquiry provided an opportunity for a plurality of perspectives to be heard.

The Inquiry began with a briefing to the committee members from the Police service and a visit to Cabramatta which included a tour of the police station and the Cabramatta CBD: the committee also went to the Fairfield City Council where they met informally with Council representatives and some representatives of the community (Legislative Council, 2001: 2). The first hearing was held on November 8, 2000 which

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<sup>37</sup> Overall there were forty-six submissions received by the committee, some of whom remained anonymous (Legislative Council, 2001:1).

was the first of ten hearings which included formal evidence and some informal community meetings: there was also a visit to Cabramatta High school to consult with teachers, students (past and present) and parents (Legislative Council, 2001: 2). There were visits to Cabramatta in December 2000 and May 2001, where the committee toured some community sites and consulted with community workers and their clients (Legislative Council, 2001: 2).<sup>38</sup> The findings of the Inquiry were summarised within the Legislative Council “Report on Inquiry into Cabramatta Policing” released in July 2001. In her foreword to the report, the Chair of the committee, the Hon Helen Sham Ho, stated that the report recognised the problems caused by drug related activities in Cabramatta, that it was about listening to the community and to frontline police officers and their views on the out of control nature of the drug problem in Cabramatta, and that it hoped to help find solutions to the problems in a constructive way (Legislative Council, 2001:x-xi).

After the initial Inquiry in 2000-2001, there was a review conducted in 2002 to report on the progress made since the first Inquiry. In this report it was noted that the Cabramatta Package, a set of measures to address the drug and crime problems

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<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that some officials who were invited to make submissions or appear before the committee chose not to do so. This is discussed in more detail within the report (Legislative Council, 2001: 3). Also discussed is the scrutiny that the committee was placed under due to the controversial nature of the Inquiry. This is also discussed within the report (Legislative Council, 2001: 2-3).

announced by the Premier of NSW in March 2001, corresponded significantly to the evidence provided in the Inquiry (Legislative Council, 2002: 7). While the review admitted that the achievements of the Cabramatta Package were open to further discussion and consideration, most of the initiatives announced were implemented and there was a significant increase in resources (Legislative Council, 2002: 19). At the time of the original Inquiry in 2000, the community was experiencing a significant incidence of gang-related violence and a high level of drug activity (Legislative Council, 2002: 29). At the time of the review, while there were still problems identified, there were improvements to the community's quality of life through the significant reduction of drug-related crime (Legislative Council, 2002: 29). While this later review of the Inquiry in 2002 recognized that there was still a long way to go in terms of securing significant and sustainable improvements for Cabramatta, many of the recommendations of the Inquiry – which themselves emerged from the evidence and submissions of the community-- were adopted and much progress in terms of improving the quality of life in Cabramatta had been achieved.<sup>39</sup>

The Inquiry opened up a space where many different perspectives of life in Cabramatta were revealed. Many previous media and general representations of Cabramatta consisted in either its portrayal as “Australia's drug capital” or as an exotic

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<sup>39</sup> See in particular Chapter Three of the Review (Legislative Council, 2002: 29-48).

destination for a multicultural food and shopping experience. From the perspectives of individuals within the Cabramatta community itself, those representations could not possibly represent the depth and complexity of their lived experience. The only way to begin to paint a richer picture of life in Cabramatta is through the visibility of many points of view. In the introduction to the report on the inquiry, the Committee Chair expressed her gratitude to the many individuals, organisation, police officers and members of the community for contributing to the Inquiry through submissions, evidence and participation, stating:

To those officers and members of the Cabramatta community who raised their voice through this inquiry - this is your report. I congratulate the Cabramatta community for fighting for their right to be heard and to live and work without fear. The victory is yours. (Legislative Council, 2001: xi)

This sums up the Arendtian insight that all human beings have a right to appear in a world with others. Not only do the perspectives of the many ensure the reality of the world, the many subjective views of that which is common to all that ensures the objectivity of our worldly experience. As Arendt emphasizes "... the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others..." (Arendt, 1998: 199). The Inquiry supported the Cabramatta community to distinguish themselves in their equality as diverse

individuals with many perspectives on the world. By providing a platform where the community in its diversity could voice their experience inter-subjectively, a richer and more nuanced picture of reality could be achieved. The implications of this were not limited to establishing the reality of the shared world, but also allowed individuals to “appear” to others and to establish their own political identity.

The world that exists between people is the space for politics to take place and in a larger sense it is the space where human beings make their appearance and where matters of public interest take center stage (Arendt, 2003: 19-20). The Inquiry provided a space for individuals to make a binding commitment, what Arendt terms a “mutual contract” (Arendt, 1965:169). This binding promise was empowering for every individual because it constituted a collective based upon equality. As Arendt argues, the alliance between partners within a mutual contract ensures that previously isolated individuals are bound together through equality and as such all are equally empowered (Arendt, 1965:169-170). Thus the first achievement of the Inquiry was to empower individuals through a form of equality only achievable politically.

### ***The Co-Creation of “a World” Through the Power of Collective Action***

The aims of the Inquiry were to more fully reveal the issues plaguing Cabramatta from many perspectives through listening to those whose subjective experiences had been previously discounted. This supported the possibility of addressing the problems that were affecting the lives of so many in the community. The power expressed through the human capacity for political organization is supported by the making of promises and the



capacity for forgiveness, which create a space of certainty between human beings in their plurality (Arendt, 1965: 174-175). This space of certainty constitutes a “stable worldly structure” that supports the power of collective action to have a presence and influence over the future (Arendt, 1965: 174-175).

As Arendt states:

Just as promises and agreements deal with the future and provide stability in the ocean of future uncertainty where the unpredictable may break in from all sides, so the constituting, founding, and world-building capacities of man concern always not so much ourselves and our own time on earth as our “successor,” and “posterities.” (Arendt, 1965: 175)

As beings-in-the-world, we find meaning through our relations with others. As action depends upon plurality and as power is actualized through these relationships, the capacity to make and keep promises with each other is possibly “the highest human faculty” (Arendt, 1965: 175). While I am not arguing that the Inquiry exemplified promise keeping or forgiveness, I would suggest that its concern with providing a platform that could reveal the lived experience of the community and its aim to more fully understand the issues that impacted the community meant that it supported the creation of a space where promises could be made and forgiveness could become a

reality. From an Arendtian perspective, the relationship between power and politics has significant positive implications for human lived experience. It is within those public spaces characterized by collective action that human beings can co-create a durable set of institutions to support human flourishing. Thus by making recommendations based on listening to the experiences of the community and addressing their concerns, the Inquiry supported the co-creation of a worldly space that embodied a set of institutions that could support the wellbeing of the community.

The Inquiry prompted new legislation to address the issues of drug related crime in Cabramatta and, as I acknowledged in Chapter Six, this included an increase in police powers such as “drug house legislation” and “move on powers” (Legislative Council, 2002: 7) the capacity for Magistrates to require addicts to undertake treatment to be eligible for bail and an increase of treatment places for drug rehabilitation (Legislative Council, 2002: 14-15). These measures would improve the accessibility and the safety of Cabramatta’s physical public spaces and thus enhance the quality of life of members of the community<sup>40</sup>. In taking an Arendtian perspective on the value of the Inquiry, it is also

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<sup>40</sup> It is important to note that while the legislation led to positive gains for the community, a further review of the government’s implementation of the twenty-five recommendations of the Inquiry stated that there were still some issues present within the community. It also stated that without constant maintenance of concerted efforts to address any ongoing issues with drugs, improvements may not be long lasting (Legislative Council, 2002: 77).

clear that improvements to the public space figuratively speaking, had positive consequences for individuals who were able to act collectively in a political space of plurality and equality.

While it is clear that the Inquiry could not reveal the full breadth of experiences and perspectives within the community, the fact that community representatives, students, teachers, parents and front-line police officers could share their subjective experiences in a unique public space not previously available meant that the public sphere could attain an “objectivity” that it did not have before. The equality of the public realm is an equality not of sameness, but a political form of equality that is a “project”, born of political organization and inter-subjectively guaranteed through human organization (Canovan, 1995: 239-241). An Arendtian public sphere endows a specific quality on plurality in that it demands recognition of the implications of the differences between ourselves and others (Frazer, 2009: 209-210). This is important in the sense that plurality does more than reveal the meaning of human action: it illuminates the many-sidedness of the common world which provides action with its meaning (Arendt, 1998: 199). The power that is expressed through collaborative human relationships depends upon human plurality, just as power creates and sustains the realm in which human plurality can appear (Allen, 1999: 100-101). The Inquiry can be understood as a space of

potential and actual empowerment, co-created through the efforts of a plurality of individuals.

### ***The Achievement of a Political Identity***

Arendt argues that there are consequences for the ways in which we disclose our unique identity through action and speech, that we cannot help but reveal our subjectivity through our perspective on the objective world (Arendt, 1998: 183) The fact of our being, that we are always situated within a realm of other people, means that we cannot be the sole story tellers of our own lives, yet we cannot help but begin a story just by our existence (Arendt, 1998: 184). It is this beginning which is important and despite the obstacles and challenges faced by the community, the participation of members of the Cabramatta community in the Inquiry represented a new beginning through action. From an Arendtian perspective this is the “miracle” of the unexpected nature of human action: the uniqueness of every human being ensures that every individual can “perform what is infinitely improbable” (Arendt, 1998: 178). This implies that as human beings we are all capable of making a difference to our circumstances into which we are born, despite our lack of sole authorship of our own life stories. It is a significant achievement in itself to have the courage to act and to answer the question of who we are or as Arendt puts it; “The connotation of courage, which we now feel to be an indispensable quality of the hero, is in fact already present in a willingness to act and speak at all, or insert one’s self into the world and begin a story of one’s own.” (Arendt, 1998: 186).

What is required for the beginnings of this story is a public space that welcomes human natality and the new beginnings inherent to human action. Within Arendt's writing, this is articulated as the space of the "polis" which both welcomes the new beginnings of action and provides limited correctives for its possible outcomes (Arendt, 1998: 197-198). In constituting a space that supported the Cabramatta community to make new beginnings through speech and action, the Inquiry created opportunities for the actualization of human freedom. As Arendt argues "...freedom as a political reality is identical with a space of movement between men." (Arendt, 1994b: 473). This space of movement is a political space within which freedom is actualized through human inter-subjective relations (Arendt, 1965: 23). The Inquiry was not only a public space of plurality, but also an organized space where the community could voice their opinions and tell their stories in a way that ensured a durability of the power manifested through collective speech and action. Not only was appearance guaranteed by the public nature of the Inquiry, but an enduring record of the unique and diverse opinions and experiences was created through the publication of the findings in the report.

While the Inquiry itself could not ensure that the problems associated with drug activity and crime in Cabramatta would be addressed once and for all, what it did offer was a possibility for the individuals who lived there to appear in their plurality and equality: as distinct individuals with their own stories to tell. In seeking and making submissions and in speaking or attending the Inquiry, members of the community contributed to the co-creation of a space where collective action could express power.

From an Arendtian perspective, the efforts to gain an insight into the problems of Cabramatta through a richer picture of lived experience from the perspective of those that lived and worked there was expressive of power. However, it is important to remember that power also supports the existence of public space, where human beings can appear in their equality and distinction and bind themselves together through mutual promise (Arendt, 1998: 244-245; Allen, 1999: 101-102).

While not all members of the community were able to make submissions to the Inquiry or even to attend it, the public nature of the Inquiry made it possible for community representatives, members of the police force and community leaders and politicians to create a web of relationships where the subjective experiences of the many could find their expression. This is highly relevant in the context of making the physical spaces of Cabramatta safer and thus helping to overcome the isolation experienced by members of the community who were confined to their own homes. It is also important in the sense of how bringing new perspectives of lived experience to public attention allows the voices of the marginalized to join with others to create the shared meanings inherent to “civic practices”.

The Inquiry provided the platform for individuals to appear, to bind themselves through collective action through their own unique relationships to the world. What is most important for institutions that embody power is to remain open to the fragility of the binding connections between human beings. Arendt argues that while promise making and keeping provides some stability to human affairs, it is important to recognize that

these are only “isolated islands of certainty” in an “ocean of uncertainty” (Arendt, 1998: 244). To try to control the whole realm of human affairs, or to aim for a prescribed or knowable outcome, would only undermine the bonds between human beings arising from the spirit of mutual promise (Arendt, 1998: 244). The Inquiry could not promise a “quick fix” to all the problems in the community, but what it did offer was recognition of equality through distinction and the achievement of a political identity through the welcoming of spontaneous new beginnings. In this context, the faculty of forgiveness is highly important as a remedy to overcoming the irreversibility of past actions to ensure openness to the future (Arendt, 1998: 237). The Inquiry did not try to lay blame on any one party for the problems of Cabramatta, but discussed the problems in an open way with a focus on understanding the past to improve the future.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE POLITICAL**

Arendt’s account of public and political space is characterized by recognition of the possibilities for individuals to reveal their identity and the ways in which this act of revelation constitutes self-understandings that have a worldly dimension (Hansen, 1993: 73). As a public space in which individuals within the community came together in their plurality and uniqueness, the Inquiry into Cabramatta policing embodied possibilities of collective politics that offered transformative possibilities in terms of worldly space and

in the context of individual self-understandings. While the in-between space is a sphere of shared common interests that reflect objective states of affairs in the world, there is another dimension to this space that is constituted through inter-subjective speech and action (Arendt, 1998: 182-183).

The power that was actualized within the political space created by the Inquiry was crucial for the community in Cabramatta, not only in precipitating legislation that would support the possibility of future political participation, but in offering the possibility of collective action. The possibility of new beginnings through action and the possible future preservation of political public spaces were the legacy of the Inquiry. The world that exists between human beings provides the common ground for human relationships, connecting individuals together and providing a space within which shared meanings can be articulated (Arendt, 1998: 204). The Inquiry constituted a space in which people could talk about “the world” between them and where shared meanings could be established. This is central to human well-being in the sense that in talking about the shared world, individuals “humanize” the world in which they live (Arendt, 1996: 25).

As I discussed in my Foucauldian analysis of Cabramatta, the stereotypes of “Asian crime” and the portrayal of Cabramatta as the Australia’s drug capital limited the possibilities for self-understanding I examined how the visibility constituted through a discourse that connected race with crime, subjected members of the community to relations of power branded individuals and separated them from wider society. Foucault’s



account of power recognizes that the constitution of our individual identity is informed by our subjection to the control of others and the way in which we are tied to our own identities (Foucault, 2002: 331).

From an Arendtian perspective however the visibility of the public realm is dependent upon plurality and the power of collective action (Gordon, 2002: 137-138).<sup>41</sup> It is power that ensures visibility in the sense of being able to fully appear and in our full appearance the world is experienced in its fullest reality (Arendt, 1998: 199-200). As the world is created through our collective action and sustained by our commitment to it and to each other, the dangers of worldlessness abound where the space between human beings has wasted away and a “desert” world has taken its place (Arendt, 2005: 201-203). By “desert” world, Arendt means that the spaces between human beings have lost their dynamism and their capacity to relate human beings in a way that preserves distinctness and equality.

The world is a reflection of our inter-subjective existence and when the world become inhumane it is as a result of the failing of our political life together (Arendt, 2005: 202). In many ways, the Inquiry helped to humanize the in-between space between

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<sup>41</sup> See Gordon (2002) for an interesting and insightful discussion on the role of visibility in Foucault’s and Arendt’s accounts of power. Gordon argues that visibility is essential for resistance and that Arendt’s insights on the relationship between power, visibility, plurality, freedom and natality can help explain how we can resist Foucauldian power (Gordon, 2002: 126).

individuals whose public spaces had lost their capacity to illuminate the meaning of human action. The power expressed through the Inquiry was characterized by an emphasis on human plurality, a welcoming stance towards the new beginnings of action and the creation of shared meanings that could support the future well-being of the community.

Embodied within Arendt's understanding of power is the notion that we achieve our individual identity in acting with others (Arendt, 1998: 176-177). In constituting a space where individuals could achieve a political identity, the Inquiry supported the Cabramatta community to distinguish themselves as diverse individuals with many unique standpoints towards the world. As reality is constituted through a plurality of perspectives, what was revealed through the critical perspectives embodied within the Inquiry was a humanly constructed worldly reality. This revelation of reality was empowering for the community who made a transition from the invisibility forced upon them through their political isolation to a political space where they could achieve their identity in solidarity with others.<sup>42</sup>

For Arendt, human lived experience is intricately tied to the wellbeing of the humanly constructed world. The implications of the undermining of the relationship

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<sup>42</sup> George Kateb (1977: 150) discuss this transition in the context of three representations of the political actor in Arendt's work.

between the individual and the world is best revealed in the light of Arendt's insistence on the capacity of the public realm to illuminate the meaning of human experience and to provide a space for the potentialities of human action to take shape.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The aim of this Chapter was to examine the practical implications of Arendt's account of the relationship between power and lived experience, the case of Cabramatta. While my Foucauldian analysis recognized the dangers of power within social-political spaces where individual subjectivities were constituted the possibilities associated with collective political action were not fully explored. What was left largely unaccounted for were the ways in which the power of collective action helped the Cabramatta community to make a new beginning in the worldly sense of the term. Arendt's insights on power offered a contrasting perspective that emphasized the importance of political community for keeping us connected to the web of relationships (the world) in which our actions attain their highest meaning. As I discussed earlier, exclusion from the public realm can lead to a form of disconnection from the realm of human affairs- a kind of worldlessness- that has significant implications for the individual and for the world.

What was missing from my Foucauldian analysis of power in Cabramatta was an account of the power and importance of collective political action for the preservation of

a world that in Arendtian terms, provides a home for human beings (Arendt, 1995: 10-11). While Foucault explained the ways in which inter-subjective relations of power can operate to shape our self-understandings in constraining ways, Arendt provided an account of how power can sustain a world that can promote human well-being. Without the power expressed through collective action in a public/political world there is a real risk of worldlessness marked by a loss of the objectivity that relates us in our equality and allows our distinctness as individuals to appear.<sup>43</sup>

In this chapter I articulated the Inquiry into Policing in Cabramatta as a co-created public/political space that played a considerable role in bringing to light the possibilities embodied by the power of collective action. I explained that in recognising the implications of Cabramatta's drug and crime problems for the community, and by providing a forum within which individuals could appear as unique human beings, the Inquiry supported the possibilities of collective political action for those formerly rendered "worldless" by the destruction of their public spaces.

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<sup>43</sup> See Arendt's discussion of action (Arendt, 1998: 175-180) and her discussion of Lessing (Arendt, 1995: 11-17).

## LIMITATIONS OF MY ARENDTIAN ANALYSIS

One of the most obvious limitations of my Arendtian analysis rests on the importance of the public/private distinction for Arendt's account of power.<sup>44</sup> Arendt's recognition of the public character of power, gives rise to her failure to recognize relations of power in the social realm (Habermas & McCarthy, 1977: 16; Allen, 2001: 143). While her account of the differences between power and violence can partially address the differences between the power of collective action and the individual capacity to exert force or violence over others, there is an important dimension of power left unaccounted for in her writing.

The lived experience of power in Cabramatta is a case in point. While I have argued that the power of collective action had important positive consequences for the lived experience of the community, the community's experience of power was not limited to that experienced through civic practices. As my Foucauldian analysis of power in Cabramatta demonstrated, power relations played a crucial role in the constitution of

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<sup>44</sup> Habermas & McCarthy (1977: 16), argue that Arendt effectively removes strategic interactions from the political sphere, severs the connection between politics and economics and politics and social interactions and cannot account for "structural violence"

constrained forms of subjectivity in Cabramatta, working to shape self-understandings in ways that were damaging for human well-being.

While these self-understandings can be overcome through a particular form of inter-subjective human relation, according to Arendt, the social realm does not provide the platform upon which human solidarity can be achieved. Political equality is a “project” that must be developed through political forms of togetherness (Canovan, 1995: 240-241) an understanding of equality that links it clearly with the freedom of the public realm (Arendt, 1998, 32-33). However, from a practical point of view, what is required is an interpretation of Arendtian politics that remains open to the importance of the need to organize social life in such a way as to ensure that human solidarity based on a shared commitment to the world is a real possibility.

These limitations of Arendt’s account of power will inform the content of my final Chapter. In Chapter Eleven I will argue that Arendt’s and Foucault’s accounts of power mutually imply each other. By setting out a shared framework of being-in-the-world and emphasizing the ways in which what is explicit in one theory is implicit in the other I will argue that Foucault’s and Arendt’s accounts of power can be articulated as two dimensions of a more unified theoretical model of power.

## **SECTION FOUR: A CASE OF MUTUAL IMPLICATION: FOUCAULT AND ARENDT ON POWER**

### **Chapter Eleven: A Unified Framework of Power**

Through the means of conceptual and practical analyses, my thesis has examined the notions of power offered by Foucault and Arendt, with the aim of providing a more detailed understanding of the relationship between power and lived experience. As beings-in-the-world with others, we are both constrained and enabled by our relationships with other people and this is an understanding that is central to Foucault's and Arendt's perspectives on power. Through their distinct accounts Foucault and Arendt have provided two different perspectives on the ways in which power informs our lives and their insights have revealed the multi-dimensional character of power and the complexity of the relationship between power, human beings and their world. Human beings and the world in which they live are not the same and while Arendt and Foucault recognize that individuals are always more than mere members of their society, Foucault focuses on individual capacity, while Arendt recognizes the possibilities offered by collective experiences.

As Foucault in particular has emphasized, power is a potential of human inter-subjective relations actualized via the actions of individuals with agency whose own subjective experiences have been shaped by relations of power. Foucault recognizes a power that is constitutive of subjectivity through its net-like permeation of every aspect of human relations and lived experience. Power is strategically exercised by individuals and groups over the actions and potential actions of others, shaping the possibilities for the politicization of human life within private, social, governmental and public spaces. In contrast Arendt theorizes a power that is actualized through the collective action of a plurality of individuals within a distinct public domain. Power is constitutive of authentic political spaces where action attains its highest meaning and where a unique form of identity is revealed and performed.

Despite their contrasting perspectives and their diverging accounts of the character of the relationship between power and lived experience, Arendt's and Foucault's theorizations of power form part of a philosophical space where their distinct accounts of the relationship between individual and world can form part of a wider unified framework. My aim in this final section of my thesis is to articulate Foucault's and Arendt's perspectives of power as two dimensions of a more unified model. This aim builds upon the work of Amy Allen, whose dual analysis of Arendt's and Foucault's accounts of power emphasizes the need for a wider framework of power that embodies recognition of the different ways in which power constitutes subjectivity and agency (Allen, 2001: 143-145).



According to Allen, a Foucauldian perspective can shed light on the ways in which strategic relations of power constitute us as agents and as subjects, while an Arendtian point of view can explain how other kinds of human relations characterized by concerted action also play a role in our constitution as subjects and agents (Allen, 2001: 144). Allen suggests that the resources made available to us through Arendtian relations of power (that is through solidarity and concerted action), could assist us as individuals to resist the techniques of power (disciplinary/biopower) identified by Foucault (Allen, 2001: 144).

My own approach will build upon Allen's insights concerning the possibilities of a wider framework of power through an exploration of the ways that Foucault's and Arendt's accounts of power mutually imply each other. In this way I aim to demonstrate how both accounts of power form part of a more unified whole. The framework of power that will emerge from my analysis will draw on Foucault's and Arendt's insights without discounting the tensions between their contrasting perspectives, aims and limitations. Furthering the project of a dual analysis of Foucauldian and Arendtian power and the previous work of such writers as Villa (1992), Allen (1999; 2001), Gordon (2002) and Dolan (2005), I will acknowledge Foucault's and Arendt's shared concerns and common background without claiming that their distinct accounts of power are reducible to each other.

## BEING-IN-THE-WORLD AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR A FRAMEWORK OF POWER

The question of who we are as human beings is crucial for both Arendt and Foucault in the context of their interpretations of the ways in which our existence as human beings in a world of others shapes our individual experiences of power, our self-understandings and the possibilities for actualizing our freedom. As emphasized in Section One Foucault accepts the notion of human being as being-in-the-world-with-others, but sets apart his own approach towards understanding human experience by rejecting the unity of the subject (Foucault, 2002: 241). Specifically, for Foucault, in order to respond to the ways in which power shapes our individuality, we must question, contest, resist and refuse what we have become in order to embrace the possibilities of new forms of subjectivity (Foucault, 2002: 336).

The influence of Heidegger on Foucault's writing has been debated and discussed in the context of many different aspects of Foucault's work.<sup>45</sup> My own discussion has mostly been confined to the importance of the wider notion of being-in-the-world for Foucault's account of the relationship between power and freedom. Under the wider umbrella of human existence as being-in-the-world, the Foucauldian theme of the care of

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<sup>45</sup> An article by Timothy Raynor (2004) provides a helpful list of publications that explore this relationship with respect to many different themes.

the self suggests some parallels with the Heideggerian notion of *Dasein*. Will McNeill (1998) makes this connection and emphasizes the way in which Foucault's account of the relationship of self to self is influenced by Heidegger's account of being in that the care of the self, embodies recognition that selfhood is an ontological condition of being (McNeill, 1998: 54-55).

Heidegger explains how in being-with-others in the world we (pre-ontologically) interpret our being through our engagement with the world and it is this that results in an ontological understanding of our being through our interpretations of the world (Heidegger, 1996, 27: 121-122). In other words, the relationship of self to self has its origins in the world, in the sense that a relationship to our embodied self within the world comes from our necessary openness to the world as *Dasein* (McNeill, 1998: 55). This Heideggerian perspective of the relationship between self and world can shed further light on Foucault's emphasis on the "ontological relation to self" (McNeill, 1998: 58) that animates Foucauldian freedom. Most importantly it helps to illuminate the relationship between freedom and power in Foucault's writing, drawing attention to the worldly implications of individual practices of care of the self.

Arendt also shares Heidegger's aim to find a different way of thinking about human experience in the world in contradiction to traditional metaphysics, yet her central concern is with political experience and the retrieval of covered over understandings of the role of the political in human life (Bisowski, 1993: 872). While Arendt's account of the relationship between power and lived experience has its foundations in the

Heideggerian notion of being-in-the-world, what exactly constitutes a world for Arendt embodies specific political criteria.<sup>46</sup> For Heidegger, Dasein discloses itself through its being-in-the-world in that “World belongs to its being a self as being-in-the-world” (Heidegger, 1996: 146: 137). Arendt adopted the idea that reality is disclosed within spaces constituted by human beings, yet she took this further with her argument that reality is disclosed in a particular public/political space (Canovan, 1995:112).

In direct contrast to Heidegger and of great significance for an Arendtian conception of world is Arendt’s refusal to accept that the meaningfulness of human being-in-the-world is found primarily in an orientation to mortality.<sup>47</sup> Heidegger’s existential phenomenological approach reveals truth in the full disclosure of being in that to comprehend being in its entirety it is necessary for Dasein to be orientated towards its own death (MacAvoy, 1996: 64-65). In other words, for Dasein to live “authentically” there must be an authentic being-toward-death through care: in being orientated to the

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<sup>46</sup> According to Margaret Canovan, Arendt takes up Heidegger’s notion of world and his account of reality as that which is disclosed in humanly constituted space, yet her argument that the public realm and political spaces formed by human beings in their plurality are the spaces where reality is disclosed sets her apart from Heidegger’s philosophy (Canovan, 1995:112).

<sup>47</sup> See Young-Bruehl (1982: 75-76) who emphasizes that while Heidegger’s work emphasizes the importance of mortality, Arendt emphasizes birth and natality despite framing her work in the context of Heidegger’s “time scheme”.

possibility of death as one's own, Dasein frees itself to fulfill its possibilities for finding meaning (through care in the context of being-together with things and concern in being-with) (Heidegger, 1996, 50: 242-243).

Heidegger's thesis is that a human being is always a being-in-the-world with others and that this involves a concern with understanding the world in which Dasein is involved through care (Heidegger, 1996, 38: 166-167). Dasein's absorption in the world leads to what Heidegger calls "falling away" (Heidegger, 1996, 38: 164). In order to understand what Heidegger means by falling away, it is important to situate this concept in relation to the arguments Heidegger makes about the character of Dasein's everyday existence in the world. As being-in-the-world is always a being-in-the-world-with others, Dasein's relationship with others will shape the development of individuality. In understanding ourselves, we observe our differences to others and in responding to these differences through trying to minimize them and conform, we relate to others in a way that prevents us from developing our own authentic individuality (Mulhall, 2005: 67-69). The *They*, answers the question of who Dasein is in its everyday mode of relation to the world in the sense that it refers to all others in the world with whom we compare ourselves in our being-with-others-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1996, 126-128: 118-120).

Dasein's immersion in the *they*, leads to a falling away from genuine forms of self-understanding and an understanding of the world (Mulhall, 2005: 108-109). For Heidegger, our everyday existence and the way we relate to the *they*, leads us to adopt an in-authentic attitude towards our mortality (the fact that as mortal beings we are always

already being-toward-death) (Heidegger, 1996, 52: 236-240). Heidegger argues that “Death is the *ownmost* possibility of Da-sein. Being toward it discloses to Da-sein its *ownmost* potentiality-of-being in which it is concerned about the being of Da-sein absolutely.” (Heidegger, 1996, 52: 243). However, MacAvoy emphasizes that Dasein’s “rootedness” in the world means that being-towards-death cannot ultimately reveal the wholeness of being, thus what is required is that “...Dasein must grasp not only its death but also its birth. (MacAvoy: 1996: 69-70).

This aligns with Arendt’s refusal to accept that an individual’s orientation towards an acceptance of mortality is central to a denial of the triviality of everyday life, instead focusing on the theme of natality and new beginnings as a way to rise above self-interest and act for the love of the world (Maier-Katin & Maier Katin, 2007: 36). Arendt argues that “...natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought.” as although every human activity is grounded in natality, it is action that gives natality its worldly form (Arendt, 1998: 9). The temporality of natality is characterized by interruption, in the sense that it breaks the flow of human life towards death, so in its ontological underpinning of action, natality represents a human power of miraculous spontaneity (Arendt, 1998: 246-247). Arendt’s account of natality underpins her particular interpretation of being-in-the-world where to act within the human world is to make a unique beginning through the disclosure of our identity (Arendt, 1998: 176-178). Arendt still retains a Heideggerian view of the historical situatedness of human beings within a world constituted by the projects of

others, yet her focus on natality emphasizes the communicative and political character of the relations between the individual and the world (Brunkhorst, 2000: 188-189).

While Dasein resists in-authenticity through affirming rather than denying impending mortality, Arendt's new beginners negotiate a shared meaning of human existence through the power that is manifested by collective political action (Brunkhorst, 2000: 188-189). Despite these differences, the Heideggerian notion of being-in-the-world underpins Arendt's account of power in the sense that it is the capacity to act collectively with others who are beings-in-the-world-with-ourselves that ensures the preservation of a meaningful worldly reality.

## **A UNIFIED FRAMEWORK OF POWER**

From my examination of Foucault's and Arendt's accounts of power and my discussion of the shared philosophical background that informs their perspectives a foundation for a unified framework of power has begun to emerge. It has become apparent that as human beings who are free, yet whose agency and subjectivity is shaped by our being-in-the-world and our relationships with others, we experience power in a multitude of ways. To aim to define power as a potential or actuality of any one kind of human relationship or to confine an analysis of power to any one particular realm of human experience is to miss the opportunity to gain a richer and more nuanced

understanding of the relationship between human beings and their world. As Amy Allen has recognized, to focus solely on the effects of strategic power relations within the social realm comes at the cost of a failure to recognize the possibilities of collective forms of power within a public/political space and vice versa (Allen, 1999: 143).

From my analyses of Foucauldian and Arendtian power, it is clear that there are connections between our experiences of power, the particular relationships we have with others in different contexts and the spaces where these relationships play out. It is these connections that can account for the different roles that power plays in our lives. As beings-in-the-world, we inhabit many different realms, whether this is the social-political sphere of Foucauldian power relations or the space of the “authentically political” that is actualised through collective action. According to Gordon (2002: 133) Foucault has offered three important insights that are not recognized by Arendt: that power is “non-subjective” and is exercised through societal practices, institutions and apparatuses; that power produces individual identities; and finally that power is everywhere and in all places.<sup>48</sup> This is important in the context of ensuring that we recognise relations of power wherever, however and whenever they occur. It is important because when we achieve a

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<sup>48</sup> In terms of the second claim that power is constitutive of identity, I refer to Allen’s arguments concerning the sense in which Arendt theorizes communicative and consensual power as constitutive of agency (Allen, 2001: 145). On this view, Arendt also offers us some insights on the ways that power is constitutive of subjectivity and identity.



political identity through our co-creation of an authentic political realm, or when power is exercised over us through our internalisation of the “gaze” and judgements of others, power shapes our possibilities for action in the world, constitutes our self-understandings and provides the possibility that our actions can change the world in meaningful ways. The ways in which we take up the responsibility to constitute ourselves through relations of power and the ways we relate to other people through our actions have implications for our relationships to ourselves, the world and others.

What Foucault and Arendt have emphasized in their own unique ways is that the experiences that are part of our worldly existence embody elements that are partly determined by our social and historical situation as well as aspects that we more freely choose for ourselves. While our historical and social situatedness shapes our self-understandings and our possibilities for action, in taking up these possibilities and in trying to make sense of them, we actively shape our understanding of the world and our place within it. Our self-understandings, the direction and forms that our actions take and the way we experience the world not only become part of our identity but also shape the world itself.<sup>49</sup> Based on the insights of Foucault and Arendt, it is clear that lived

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<sup>49</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty, there is “...no inner man, man is in the world, and only on the world does he know himself.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: xi). The relationship between human beings and the world is dialectic and mutually imply each other in that human beings live in the world and are simultaneously a “project of the world” (Kwant, 1963: 66-67).

experience is characterized by the conditioned nature of our self-understandings as beings-in-the-world (the way the world and others shapes the way we see ourselves) and the many possibilities available to us through our capacity for action (the way we shape the world through our actions).

This highlights the role of freedom and its relationship with power. Gordon (1999) articulated the Heideggerian influences on Foucault's understanding of freedom and as my previous discussion in Chapter Three revealed, Foucault argues for a complex relationship between freedom and power. For Foucault power is only exercised over free individuals who have possibilities for a range of actions and reactions (Foucault, 2000: 341-342). In resisting the ways in which relations of power have shaped our subjectivities we give our freedom an expression so that, in Foucault's words, our subjectivity "...is brought into history, breathing life into it." (Foucault, 2000: 452). What I take from this understanding of the relationship between power and freedom is that my experiences with the power exercised over me via societal practices, hegemonic forms of discourse and my social relations with others may shape my individuality and self-understandings, but it does not mean that I am not free to make choices. I can take up my relationship to truth as Foucault suggests and I can partly shape my own subjectivity in different ways.

In contrast, Arendt reveals another aspect of the power-freedom relationship. Arendt theorizes freedom as an experience that we have with others, arguing that it is in our freedom to speak and act with each other that allows the objectivity of the world to appear to us: without freedom there is no politics (Arendt, 2005: 128-130). For Arendt

freedom is guaranteed through the power of collective action, yet power itself is an expression of freedom (Gordon, 2002: 134). The objectivity or reality of the world depends upon the appearance of a plurality of human beings, not of any one human being in the singular (Kattago, 2014: 60). We create a world together with others and ensure its permanence beyond any one mortal life by guaranteeing appearance and visibility to each other (Arendt, 1998: 55). When we fail to support the freedom and appearance of others, we ultimately put our own freedom at risk. As Arendt emphasizes, when our public spaces fail to illuminate plurality, true political action withers away and our world becomes inhuman, inhospitable to action and constitutive of worldlessness (Arendt, 2005: 11-13). From an Arendtian perspective, it is possible to more fully understand the importance of ensuring that no-one is prevented from appearing with others in a space where freedom can be meaningfully expressed.

The Heideggerian account of being-in-the-world and the notion of a mutually constitutive relationship between individual and world infuses Arendt's and Foucault's accounts of power. The experiences we have of the world and the experience we have of a self which is in the world cannot be understood in separation from each other as they are intricately and necessarily connected (Kwant, 1963: 67-68). However, both Foucault and Arendt hold different ideas about the character of this mutual interaction and how these transformational experiences are achieved. The world shapes our subjective experiences and self-understandings, yet as acting agents in the world we also have the

capacity to alter our experiences, question our self-understandings and shape ourselves and our world through our actions.

What is important for both Arendt, Foucault and from my own perspective is that as beings-in-the-world, individuals take up the question of the meaning of their own existence through navigating the complex relationship between power and freedom. As an individual I give my life meaning through consciously interpreting the ways in which I am shaped by the power exercised over me, while taking responsibility for the power I exercise over others and myself and being open to the possibilities enabled by my capacity to collectively express power with others. Because power is closely related to knowledge and is exercised through disciplinary practices, power's constitutive function has significant implications for both the individual and for the world. While both Foucault and Arendt argue against the existence of a specific and universal "human nature", it is clear from their writing that both would consider that any relation of power or collective project that undermines the possibilities of action will have a negative impact on human wellbeing and for that reason should be avoided.

In light of these considerations a unified framework of power must recognize the multi-dimensional character of power, the different roles it plays in human life and the complexity of the relationship between power and freedom. I agree with Villa's observation that it is essential to recognize that power uses us just as we use power (Villa, 1992: 715) and I would argue that we experience power through our relations with others whether this takes place in the social realm of our everyday lives or within a public space

where we can act with others to achieve common political goals. Power is experienced differently depending on *where* it is experienced and in the context of the kind of relationship that we engage in. I can exercise power over others in my personal relationships; I experience the force of a power exercised over me via social expectations and practices; I can exercise power over myself when I recognize the role of power in the constitution of my subjectivity; and I can act with others to express a collective form of power that can create long lasting worldly institutions.

Foucault's account of the relationship between power and freedom illustrates the mutual interaction between human beings and the world: we are shaped by the world in which we act but we also shape the world through our actions and our freedom. This emphasizes the fact that despite our constitution through relations of power we are always free in the ontological sense recognised by Gordon (1999). Arendt's account of freedom on the other hand, provides a framework for understanding how our relationships with others and our appearance in a public realm of speech and action, can create a meaningful space for human action and new beginnings through freedom. For Arendt, in acting politically individuals imprint their unique identity on the world in a way that is not decided beforehand, but is unpredictable, and it is in this way that new beginnings through freedom are made (Grafstein, 1986: 467).<sup>50</sup> A unified framework of

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<sup>50</sup> Grafstein (1986: 477-478) argues that Arendt tries (unsuccessfully) to fuse "holism" and "individualism" in the context of notions of "social identity", by emphasizing the importance of the public

power can recognize both these perspectives of freedom and this is important to more fully understand the limits and possibilities of power. In the following section I will defend this view of power and demonstrate how the concept of being-in-the-world plays out in Foucault's and Arendt's theories of power through a more in-depth explanation of how each theorist articulates different dimensions of human Dasein and how they understand the relationship between the individual and the world. In this context I will explicate the implicit assumptions that underpin Arendt's account of power and explain how these assumptions are key tenets of Foucault's theorisation of power and vice versa.

As I will explain, Foucault's account of power presupposes some of Arendt's insights on the significance of a humanly constituted "world" for human well-being, in particular, Foucault's recognition that as beings-in-the-world, our resistance to practices of domination have worldly consequences. There is of course a significant difference between acknowledging that a shared moral space can be constituted through individual responses to shared suffering and Arendt's project to re-establish an authentically political realm of collective action. Arendt emphasises that in caring for the world, we guarantee our own well-being in that the world provides the commonality that links human beings together.

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realm for giving action an identity without undermining the role of the individual in deciding the identity of their actions.

While Foucault's focus remains firmly on the individual and the possibilities for responding of relations of power through resistance, there is an implicit assumption that what we share as human beings gives meaning to our efforts at contestation and resistance. Foucault draws upon an implicit moral framework when he emphasizes revolt as the "last touchstone of human dignity" (Grumley, 2006: 61) and when he emphasises that the meaning of resistance is grounded in a humanly shared connection to social events and a shared capacity to reflect on human suffering, (Foucault, 2002: 471). While Foucault does not explicitly adopt an Arendtian account of "the world", his account of the relationship between power and freedom presupposes the importance of an intersubjective world within which acts of resistance and creative efforts to constitute one's own self-understandings are meaningful. As Allen argues the kind of collective communicative power relations that shape our identities in normatively positive ways can also play a part in our efforts to resist the normalising effects of disciplinary/biopower (Allen, 1999: 145).

Conversely Arendtian power is also supported by the possibility of Foucauldian resistance in that the power of collective action depends upon the capacity for individuals to resist Foucauldian power relations. As Foucault emphasizes, the way in which disciplinary power constitutes acting subjects makes it possible for individuals to question and contest their self-understandings and political situatedness to engage in practices of freedom. In theorising the powerful possibilities of collective action, Arendt presupposes the existence of Foucauldian subjects whose self-understandings are constituted through disciplinary/biopower. While Arendt warns against the notion the

human world can be altered by focussing on the possibilities of changing individuals within it, (an argument against a universal human nature), she does recognise that human beings “...produce what they themselves are not...”and that it is within this worldly artifice that human beings act (Arendt, 2005: 106-107). Surely the point is that without resisting the conformity of the social realm, it is difficult, if not impossible to be able to participate in the kinds of collective action that are, to put it in Arendtian terminology, “world-building”.<sup>51</sup>

The last section of this chapter will demonstrate the importance of Arendt’s adoption of the private/public distinction in that it informs her account of the “what” and “where” of power and ultimately ensures that Foucault’s and Arendt’s accounts of power are not reducible to each other. Arendt’s attempt to protect the political realm from the “rise of the social” leads her to discount the ways that subjectivity and agency are constituted through social practices and institutions (Allen, 2001: 143-144). Arendt’s account of power does not address the constitutive effects of power in disciplinary space, nor does she theorise the possibilities associated with practices of self-constitution.

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<sup>51</sup> It is important to note that Arendt argues that to be concerned about “man” in the singular, is to risk escaping “...into an interior where at best reflection is possible, but not action or change.” (Arendt, 2005: 107). This does not undermine my argument about collective politics being supported by individual forms of (Foucauldian) resistance, as resistance may embody reflection but is also an activity. An act of self-constitution in Foucauldian terms.



Nevertheless, I will demonstrate that these are aspects of power upon which her own account of power as collective action relies implicitly.

## **FOUCAULDIAN POWER AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING WITH OTHERS**

As I emphasized in Chapter One, Foucault recognizes that power is a relational experience that is dependent upon human agency and freedom. Power relationships depend upon agency on both sides of the equation: the agency of those who exercise power and the preservation of the agency of those upon whom power is exercised (Foucault, 2002, 340). Power, as a relational potential of the inter-subjective realm, requires the existence of human beings with a capacity to act and to be acted upon. Power constitutes human subjectivity because as beings-in-the-world, we are always already born into a world of power relations that provide a context for meaning.

In my earlier analyses of Foucauldian power, I argued that Foucault's understanding of the relationship between power and freedom explained how subjects resist relations of power that have played a significant role in the constitution of their subjectivity. When we question and contest what power has made us, we are not acting from outside powers influence, yet our resistance is meaningful because our actions are one possibility from a myriad of possibilities open to us as human beings who are free. According to a Foucauldian perspective, the question of the meaning of existence-- the

idea that Dasein is a being whose existence is always an issue for it-- is taken up through questioning and resisting the ways in which power has shaped us and through practicing a form of self-government that is constitutive of new forms of subjectivity. While Foucault's account of power emphasizes individual capacity for taking up the question of meaning, what requires further explanation is the relationship between self and world.

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF AND WORLD: FOUCAULDIAN RESISTANCE**

Foucault illuminates a clear connection between self and world through his emphasis on the ways in which our self-understandings are shaped by our visibility in the world and by the ways that we are observed and judged by others. This aligns with the Sartrean insight that a constant fact of human existence is that we are always “*being-for-others*” and that this is a significant element of how we form our self-understandings (Sartre, 2003: 303). On this view, subjectivity is inter-subjectively achieved through the way that every human being internalises the gaze of the other. Power is exercised through this visibility in the world and depends upon the human capacity to experience one's own visibility and to monitor and supervise one's own behavior in response to a power that is invisible (Foucault, 1995: 201).

For Foucault, the interiorization of the gaze of disciplinary society ensures that human bodies are controlled not through physical force, but through the shaping of self-

understandings (Foucault, 1980: 155; Gordon, 2002: 129) via practices that divide the individual, i.e.; separating the individual from others and within themselves (Foucault, 2002: 326). This aspect of the way in which power constitutes us as subjects can obscure the possibilities open to us to resist relations of power and express our freedom. Thus we experience a tension between the concept that we are autonomous individuals making meaningful choices in the world and the way in which the world has shaped and limited the choices we make. This tension in our lived experience of power reflects the character of our lived experience as a being-in-the-world with others. Foucault's account of power clearly illustrates one aspect of the relationship between self and world in that he provides a detailed theorization of the ways in which our embodied being-in-the-world shapes our self-understandings. Arendt provides a contrasting account of this relationship, demonstrating the ways in which our agency allows us to both create and enter into a human world where we can appear in our equality and distinctness (Arendt, 1998: 176-177).

As I have emphasized earlier in my conceptual analysis of Foucauldian power, Foucault recognizes that the social and historical situatedness of our lived experience works in two ways: it constrains and limits us through the way in which we are constituted through particular social practices and techniques of power, and it enables us to transform our experience when we recognize that there is no necessity or universality in our particular experience. The complex relationship between freedom and power is illustrated by the practical example of Cabramatta and the media reporting of

Cabramatta's crime and drug problems. As I explained in my analysis in Chapter Six, the possibilities of self-understandings available to individuals in the Cabramatta community were significantly limited and shaped by powerful discourses that connected crime and race in a particular way. The print media reporting and commentary around the time of John Newman's murder represented discursive practices of power which had implications for the community in terms of the constitution of subjectivity. In reference to the work of Teo (2000) and Collins (1994), I emphasized the way in which generalizations about race and crime covered over the diversity of the Cabramatta community and portrayed particular groups within the community as a threat to the wider society. This worked to exclude and categorize members of the community, shaping their self-understandings in ways which were limited and constraining.

Despite these constraints and limitations, members of the community still retained the capacity to question and contest these self-understandings and the social spaces in Cabramatta still offered opportunities for resistance. In questioning the necessity of the unity imposed by the connections made between race and crime, the community took up the question of the meaning of their own being. It was through the efforts of members of the community who refused to accept the conditions they lived under as "necessary" that prompted the Inquiry into Policing. It is important to emphasize that while the inter-subjective character of human existence places particular limitations upon human beings who, as beings-in-the-world are always caught up within the web of power, power produces acting subjects who can choose from a field of alternatives and

can create new possibilities through their actions (Foucault, 2002: 340-342; Foucault, 2008: 96).

### **CARE OF THE SELF: WORLDLY IMPLICATIONS**

In his later ethical work, Foucault re-focused his account of the relationship between power and freedom on the possibilities associated with self-government and more specifically the care of the self. Through his account of care of the self, Foucault illuminated the way in which as embodied subjects constituted by power we still retain the capacity to respond politically to powerful societal pressure. As embodied beings whose constitution by power has provided us with the resources to create new and novel subjectivities, we are enabled through the power that constitutes us to transform our experience of the world. What grounds lived experience from a Foucauldian perspective is an implicit recognition of being-with, in the context of the inter-subjective nature of our personal experiences, as Foucault states:

An experience is something that one has completely alone but can have fully only to the extent that it escapes pure subjectivity, and that others can also - I won't say repeat it exactly, but at least encounter it- and go through it themselves. (Foucault, 2002: 245)

The above statement emphasizes the Arendtian insight that the shared world provides reality to our individual experiences (Arendt, 1998: 198-199). In other words, for Foucault, self-understanding in the fullest sense is only possible because we share a world with others who are capable to self-understanding too. This rests on the Heideggerian account of human Dasein where Dasein develops individuality and self-understanding partly through relationships with others in the world and in this sense subjectivity is constituted inter-subjectively (Mulhall, 2005: 66-67). Dasein gains self-understanding in the context of its world and through its relationships with others because *being-with* is an "...attribute of one's own Das-ein." (Heidegger, 1996, 120: 113). The possibility of self-understanding is grounded by inter-subjectivity in the sense that what makes knowing ourselves possible is a "primordially existential kind of being" which requires understanding of being-with (Heidegger, 1996, 123:116). This does not deny subjectivity but recognizes that how we relate to and understand others with whom we share the world, determines how we understand ourselves (Mulhall, 2005: 66-67).

While it is clear that that as beings-in-the-world our self-understandings are shaped by our situatedness in a world of others, it is also the case that the way we develop self-understandings will have worldly effects; the way we live in the world and relate to others will reflect the extent to which we have actively constituted our own subjectivity. This is clear in Foucault's claims about the ways in which practices of freedom help to define the many possibilities for freedom in the world (Foucault 1997a: 283). As Foucault argues that individual experiences are only coherent in the sense that

they are also a possibility for others (Foucault, 2002: 245), caring for the self can be understood as a practice with a worldly orientation. This notion finds support in the work of Connelly who argues that care for the self can be personified as “...care for an enlarged diversity of life in which plural constituencies coexist in more creative ways than sustained by a communitarian idea of harmony or a liberal idea of tolerance...” (Connelly, 1993: 378-379).

Ella Myers argues that aspects of Foucault’s writing that are concerned with the possibility of creating a world through collaboration instead of self-constitution should be emphasized in that they reveal freedom as an “associative activity” which has the capacity to change shared aspects of the world that are problematic to a diversity of communities (Myers, 2008: 141). However, Myers challenges the notion that practices of self-care can ground collective politics, arguing that “ethics” should not be grounded on the relationship of self to self, but should be considered in terms of relationships between plural individuals (Myers, 2008: 142). I acknowledge Myers’ concerns, yet there is something to be said for the importance of self-mastery (as Foucault theorizes it) as a foundation for shaping our relationships with others in ways that promote well-being.

It is also the case that the Foucauldian understanding of freedom as a way of living in the world that is visible to others (an ethos) implies a worldly dimension to our ethics understood in terms of the relation of self to self. As we are constituted through social practices and relations of power, the degree to which these power relations are more or less open to human possibility makes a difference in the forms of subjectivity

made available to us. The way we exercise power over ourselves others makes a difference to the way we exercise power over others: the care of the self, grounds an ethos or way of living in the world that has consequences for the realm of inter-subjectivity (Foucault, 1997a: 286-287). The character of the inter-subjective realm influences the ways we experience power, yet our experience of power in the world and how we respond to power relations changes the character of the world. Practices of freedom change the world in the sense that in caring for the self we live in the world in a particular way: we refrain from abusing our power over others and we recognize our responsibilities as beings-in-the-world (Foucault, 1997a: 288). This notion of the relationship between self and “world” does not strictly equate with Arendt’s concept of the world as the public realm, however it is another way of expressing the Heideggerian notion of “being free for one’s own most possibilities”, that is the notion of human wellbeing as a project accomplished through care (Heidegger, 1996, 199: 185).

As Dasein, our lives are an issue for us, and as such we live our lives through actualizing the possibilities made available to us through our particular situations: we *project* ourselves on to our possibilities through an understanding of the world (Mulhall, 2005: 81). Our capacity for understanding supports the possibilities for our individual growth and progress and it is through the activity of self-development that we can achieve a deeper understanding of our own being (Mulhall, 2005: 84). For Heidegger, Dasein finds its meaning in the world, but without Dasein, the world has no meaning, as Heidegger states; “Meaning is an existential of Dasein, not a property which is attached



to beings, which lies “behind” them or floats somewhere as a “realm between.”  
(Heidegger, 1996, 151: 142).

Foucault locates freedom in the hands of embodied human beings who are constituted within a space of governmentality and who recognize a commonality in their universal suffering: how we relate to ourselves provides the context for our relationship to others. (Grumley, 2006: 62). This is reflective of the Heideggerian notion of *being-with* as a general feature of Dasein’s being-in-the-world. For Heidegger, through caring for a common aspect of the shared world, what is termed an “*authentic alliance*” can support an “...objectivity which frees the other for himself in his freedom.” (Heidegger, 1996, 122: 115).

This notion of a commonality is clearly evident within Arendt’s account of human solidarity and the power it actualizes, yet Foucault also recognizes a duty towards the freedom of others in the context of a shared experience of being members of the “community of the governed” (Foucault, 2000: 474). Earlier in my thesis I discussed Foucault’s statement concerning our responsibility to confront governments on the issue of human rights, within which he outlined three principles grounding the right for private individuals to speak out against abuses of human rights. These included the notion of an international citizenry and its implication of mutual solidarity, governmental responsibility for human wellbeing in the context of policies and their failures and the responsibility of every individual to ensure that human suffering and misery always has a voice through political participation (Foucault, 2002: 474-475). This demonstrates that

Foucault does recognize a sense in which each individual has some responsibility, obligation or duty towards the shared human world.

The notion of individual capacity and our obligations to other human beings in the world highlights an important aspect of Foucauldian power that is grounded by Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world. Foucault emphasizes a general problem for the constitution of the self as an ethical entity in a modern society where human beings are essentially governed through their freedom (Foucault, 1998: 94). As free subjects constituted through power, we have some obligation towards the common shared world and towards others in terms of our own subjective experiences of a world that shapes our possibilities<sup>52</sup>. Foucault emphasizes that politicization embodies recognizing that power relations are implied in even those institutions and social practices that appear "neutral" thus the aim is to invent new possibilities for drawing out the political implications of social practices (Foucault, 1980: 189-190).

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<sup>52</sup> As I discussed in Chapter Two, Digeser (1992: 984-985) recognizes that Foucault's account of resistance suggests a universality that raises issues for his "nominalist framework

For Foucault what is important is that each individual can ask a question of their existence in terms that are novel and can shed light on parts of experience that we share with others: it is this creative work that will allow us to recognize a possible “we” with whom we could form “a community of action” (Foucault, 2003a: 21). In Heideggerian terms, as the meaning of being is disclosed through our relations with others, self-disclosure also discloses “worldliness” (Heidegger, 1996, 120-123: 113-116).

As Foucault acknowledges in his discussion of the work on the self in antiquity the care of the self allowed one to make an “object” of one’s existence, to embody particular values and to leave a legacy beyond one own life span (Foucault, 1991a: 362). In attempting to transform ourselves through practices of freedom, we constitute ourselves as ethical subjects within a shared world of other people and of social and political practices (Foucault, 1997a: 282-284). Unlike Arendt, Foucault does not argue that the meaningfulness of individual resistance is necessarily linked with collective projects or the creation of worldly institutions that aim to guarantee freedom (Grumley, 2006: 61). However, Foucault’s account of practices of freedom as an ethos or way of living in the world presupposes the existence of a shared space which not only shapes the possibilities of how we take up an ethical relationship to ourselves, but is also the domain where the ethical relationship of oneself to oneself affects inter-subjective relations.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> In talking about care of the self in Ancient Greek and Roman societies, Foucault states that the attitude taken toward activities in the political realm embodied “...the expression of a principle that is singular in its

Foucault's theorization of individual efforts of creativity does not rule out the collective realization of practices of freedom. As Foucault recognizes, the inter-subjective character of human life means that our personal subjective experiences can only be fully meaningful in the context that others can also experience something similar, and in the linking of our experiences with "collective practices" we can experience our subjectivity as world transforming (Foucault, 2002: 245). However, as Allen argues, Foucault's strategic notion of power prevents him from recognizing that power can be expressed through collective agreements (Allen, 1999: 56). It is my view that Foucault is merely drawing attention to the ways in which as beings-in-the-world we are necessarily members of the collective of humanity within a space of action and possibility. In this sense it is possible that practices of self-constitution could ground a particular kind of collective politics built upon recognition of a shared experience of constitutive power relations in the social/political realm. This however is far from Arendt's view of politics and collective action in that the human togetherness that grounds collective action is a togetherness characterised by speech and action in a public space (Arendt, 1998: 180).

We can reveal the ways power has constituted us to others and we can listen to others to form a moral community based upon a shared experience as human beings shaped by power: the grounding of human rights in moral reflection upon suffering as a

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manifestation within each person, but universal by the form it assumes in everyone, and collective by the community bond it establishes between individuals." (Foucault, 1996: 93).

shared experience (Foucault, 2002: 471). While resistance is a reply to the normalizing effects of society and is inherent to human interaction with the world in separation from any organization of collective politics (Rajchman, 1986: 116), individual resistance can also animate collective action and provide the impetus for individuals and social bodies to contest arrangements of power. Foucault's account of actualized freedom presupposes the existence of a worldly space where power has moral consequences.

A unified framework of power must recognize that as human beings we are necessarily free and, while we are constituted through social and historical contexts and unless we are subjected to violent means, we always retain the capacity to question and contest that which power has made us. Our individual responses to our embodied possibilities have moral consequences and it is within the world of others that our efforts come to fruition. It is our capacity to actualize our freedom through care for the self, a practice which takes place within a world of others, that equips us to form relations of solidarity with other people not characterized by dominative power relations.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF FOUCAULDIAN RESISTANCE FOR ARENDTIAN POWER**

According to Allen, Arendt's theorization of individual agency via action appears to foreshadow Foucault's account of the constitution of subjectivity via the subjectifying relations of power (Allen, 2001: 137). Allen draws attention to the way in which an

individual's actions always take place within a web of relationships that are both constraining and enabling of agency, arguing that for Arendt "... action is Janus-faced; one always acts and suffers simultaneously, and acts by virtue of suffering just as one suffers by virtue of acting." (Allen, 2001: 137).

Villa (1992: 718) also argues that Foucauldian power does not contradict Arendt's account of political action, in the sense that resistance to social relations of power can be understood as a "successor concept" to Arendtian politics: where authentic political spaces are undermined resistance takes its place. Villa argues that Arendt's public spaces are agonistic spaces undermined by normalisation and while Arendt has a stricter definition of what constitutes the political than Foucault, both are concerned with the ways in which action is made redundant by the ways in which human beings are managed and controlled (biopower for Foucault and the social for Arendt) (Villa, 1992: 718). While Foucault recognises the political opportunities created through the constitutive and productive workings of power, Arendt sees the loss of an authentic public/political realm (Dolan, 2005: 373 & 375).

However, Arendt still recognises that the web of relationships (the public realm) consists of "conflicting wills and intentions" which can prevent actions from achieving their purpose, while at the same time producing stories that are revealing the identity of the actors who make their new beginnings within it (Arendt, 1998: 184). This highlights the complexity of the relationship between individual and world in the sense that as

beings-in-the-world, we act within an already existing framework that can be experienced as constraining and enabling.

As Allen perceptively argues, Arendt's account suggests that identity is only achievable through action in public and political space and as power creates this space as the actualisation of collective action, power is also the condition for agency in its fullest sense (Allen, 2001:138). Allen makes the further point that power is also constitutive of the subject from an Arendtian perspective because the public realm as the space of appearance is what provides the world with its reality that informs our subjective experiences of it (Allen, 2001: 138-139). The world in Arendtian terms represents not only the shared realm of humanly created artifacts but also the dynamic sphere of human speech and action (Arendt, 1998: 204; Canovan, 1995: 106-108). Thus the world is a human construction that is held in common by every human being- in the sense that our subjective experiences of it together form an objective reality- and therefore it is constitutive of reality and a condition of a shared humanness (Arendt, 1998: 208-209).

According to Canovan, the term "culture" is a helpful representation of what Arendt means by "a world" in the sense of artistic endeavors created through work and enduring over time (Canovan, 1996:109). The objects in the world are a medium through which human beings can relate to each other, this providing stability to human life and a foundation for the objective reality of the world to appear to each individual in their subjective experience of it (Arendt, 1998: 137). The world in this sense is not only

conditional upon the power actualized through concerted action, but also underpins the possibility of power in its actualization.

My foregoing discussion has emphasized that while Arendt and Foucault both recognize that power is an inter-subjective experience, they hold different views concerning the ways in which power is actualized and where it is actualized. To summarize, from a Foucauldian perspective, whenever and wherever individuals or groups attempt to shape the possibilities of others actions through their own capacity for action, there is a relations of power. Thus for Foucault, power is an experience of private, social and public life, yet for Arendt, power is actualized through collective action in a public space of appearance and is not an experience of the social or private realms (see Villa, 1992: 715). Power also preserves the public realm which is “...the lifeblood of the human artifice, which, unless it is the scene of action and speech.... lacks its ultimate *raison d’être*” (Arendt, 1998: 204).

As Allen has argued, Foucault and Arendt both hold the view that individuals are shaped by power in the context of its role in the constitution of subjectivity and agency: Arendt recognizes that the power of collective action can enable human beings to rise above behavior and conformity, while Foucault reveals the dangers of a power that has constituted us in constraining and enabling ways (Allen, 2001: 142-143). Arendt’s failure to fully account for the workings of strategic power by defining power in terms of collective action and excluding social relations of power from the political realm means that she does not recognize the ways that subjectivity and agency are constituted in the



private and social realms (Allen, 2001: 143-144). Allen argues for a more complex account of how power conditions subjectivity and agency: on one level we are constituted through power relations that are social, strategic and dangerous, yet we are also constituted by collective and communicative forms of power (Allen, 2001: 145). These kinds of collectives can provide support for our resistance against the strategic forms of power that constrain us (Allen, 2001: 145).

There is another side to the relationship between Foucauldian and Arendtian power to be explored and this concerns the possibility that are capacity to participate in collective forms of power is partly formed by our individual resistance to relations of power in the social realm. Indeed, Arendt's account of political action is based on an assumption that human beings can partly overcome the constraints of their social situatedness to act with others. This becomes clear when considering Arendt's understanding of freedom as a worldly experience.

The web of human relationships is a dimension of the realm of human affairs, represented in terms of a subjective in-between of human speech and action directed toward each other (Arendt, 1998: 183).<sup>54</sup> By making a new beginning within the web of

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<sup>54</sup> Arendt states that the realm of human affairs is the web of human relationships (Arendt, 1998: 183). However, she also draws attention to two aspects of the realm of human affairs- the subjective in-between (as the intangible web of relationships) and the objective in-between which consists in human action and speech concerned with objective aspects of the world (Arendt, 1998: 182). I take this to mean that the realm

relationships, human beings actualize their freedom in the world. In understanding freedom in this way, Arendt draws upon an implicit assumption about the capacity of each individual to recognize their connection to others and to the world. In this context Arendt's account presupposes the existence of "Foucauldian subjects" who have resisted and are resisting the normalizing techniques of the social-political realm to actualize their freedom in the world. As freedom cannot be experienced in isolation, but only through human togetherness and political community (Arendt, 2005: 120-121), the actualization of freedom depends upon the existence of individuals who have resisted the conformity of the social realm. This is important because according to Arendt, the dangers of a social realm organized where economics and biological necessity take center stage lays in the way that it undermines spontaneity and action (Arendt, 1998: 40-41).

The danger associated with human relationships characterized only by a shared need to ensure economic stability or material sustenance is that the equality and distinction of each individual becomes less visible and of little consequence. This undermines what Arendt refers to as the "humanness" of the world, which requires that we all maintain an openness to plurality and display a "readiness" to share the world with others (Arendt, 1995: 24-25). It is through preserving the humanness of the world that we

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of human affairs consists in the subjective and objective, while the web of relationships concerns mostly the subjective in-between. The subjective in-between embodies a common realm within which individuals can disclose themselves (Arendt, 1998: 183-184).

can promote human wellbeing. In the public realm of appearance, human relations based only on necessity have political implications in the sense that once shared biological needs and economic concerns take center stage, the purpose of politics becomes one of managing the lives of identical human beings (Canovan, 1995: 118-119), rather than recognizing and bringing together the unique perspectives of a plurality of individuals who make up the fabric of a world in all its humanness.

As I emphasized earlier in my thesis, Arendt considers that the blurring of the boundaries between private and public characteristic of the rise of modern society has resulted in a public realm that is based upon not the togetherness of diverse human beings, but the conformity of human beings who relate to each other as “equals” in the face of the demands of economics and biological necessity. For Arendt, it is only through human natality and the new beginnings inherent to human action—that is through power and freedom— that we can relate to each other and to the world in ways that will create and preserve a world that is open to the freedom of present and future generations.

For Arendt, as for Heidegger, human life is a life lived with others and being-with is a condition of human being. Yet, as Motroshilova (2015: 38) perceptively argues, Arendt takes the notion of being-with-others much further than Heidegger, identifying a particular dimension to this realm discerned as the web of human relationships. Arendt emphasises the subjective in-between where individuals speak and act to each other, disclosing who they are and beginning a story that will have effects in the world beyond the lifespan of any one individual (Arendt, 1998: 183-184). This is important in the

context of Arendt's criticism of Heidegger's Dasein, who is a being ultimately separated from the possibility of community with others due to its orientation towards death (Bernauer, 2013: 880). Arendt's clear distinction between the earth (the natural world or nature) and the world (the humanly created world of objects, speech and action) (Arendt, 1998: 134) supports her arguments that an earthly existence with others does not embody the kind of relationship that reveals the meaning of human life within a world created by speech and action.

For Arendt what is most important, and what consequently sets her perspective apart from Foucault's account of the relationship between power and freedom in the context of the care of the self, is that action as a new beginning in freedom contains within in a "moral code" that can provide the foundation for an authentic politics.<sup>55</sup> A sole focus on the relationship between oneself and oneself cannot make visible the plurality and diversity of our humanness and thus cannot reveal the importance of the experiences only available through human togetherness, as Arendt states:

The moral code, on the other hand, inferred from the faculties of forgiving and of making promises, rests on experiences which

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<sup>55</sup> This is a slightly different point about the dissimilarities between Foucault and Arendt than the one made by Allen (2001: 142), who argues that power for Foucault is "normatively suspect", while Arendt sees power as an end in itself and normatively positive.

nobody could ever have with himself, which, on the contrary, are entirely based on the presence of others. (Arendt, 1998: 238)

When we are deprived of a public space created through collective action, all that is left is at the most freedom of thought and at least a retreat into the self, and thus from the world (Arendt, 1995: 9).

The significance of our collective experiences implies that a Foucauldian “politics of the self” enabled through creative acts of self-constitution, cannot, on its own, provide the whole answer concerning how power mediates the relationship between self and world. Indeed, Foucault’s strategic account of power relations does not recognize the possibilities of a power that is expressed via agreement and consensus (Allen, 1999: 56). However, individuals who engage in practices of self-care and take responsibility for their own constitution are individuals who are capable of developing the capacity to connect with others in forms of togetherness that meet the political criteria laid out by Arendt. Indeed, according to Foucault the care of the self in ancient times was employed to “...define and control the conditions under which one could enter political life” (Ransom, 1997: 141). Foucault’s discussion of practices of caring for the self in Ancient Greece and Rome emphasizes that the way in which we constitute ourselves as “ethical subjects” has implications not only for the possibility of individual meaning but also for the social, public and political domains in which we live our lives (Foucault, 1986: 94-95).

From an Arendtian perspective, the kind of human togetherness that expresses collective action, and thus power, is based upon both difference and equality, not upon sameness (Arendt, 1998: 214-215). This implies that those who are able to be together with others in equality and in respect for mutual agency are individuals who have risen above the conformism engendered by disciplinary/biopower to overcome (if only partly) the demands placed upon them by powerful discourses and social practices. In Foucauldian terms these are individuals who have questioned and resisted their constitution through disciplinary power and who have practiced creativity through self-constitution. In this sense the possibility of long lasting forms of collective action and the kind of collectively actualized power that creates durable institutions that support human well-being, depend upon the efforts of individuals who have engaged in acts of self-constitution.

Arendt recognizes that human beings are limited by the conditions of their worldly existence (Canovan, 1995: 103), yet she has little to say about the ways in which a creative work on the self can support the achievement of a particular relationship between self and world. However, political action is a way of relating to the world that is “creative” in the sense that it is constitutive of self-understandings, or what Arendt discusses in terms of the creation of a political identity. The Foucauldian notion of resistance and his account of care of the self can help explain how human beings can liberate themselves from necessity, contest their limited self-understandings and constitute novel subjectivities with collective and world changing possibilities. Of course

Allen also makes an important point when she draws attention to the value of collective forms of power as a resource for individual resistance (Allen, 2001: 144). In fact, I believe it is a circular relationship: we are supported to resist by other communities of action just as communities of action are supported by the contribution of individuals who have resisted what constraining forms of social relations have made them.

Most important is that what is implied within Arendt's account of political action is that while power and freedom are actualised through collective action, each individual has a role to play in the context of developing self-understandings that allow them to develop ties of solidarity with others. Arendt herself argues for the importance of selflessness, an individual's openness towards the perspective of others and the capacity to engage in forms of friendship that are world orientated and political (Arendt, 1995: 15 & 25). Thus our role can be understood as one of developing these qualities and capacities in order to ensure the preservation of humanness within the world. It is apparent that in stressing the importance of a particular attitude towards the world-one that respects plurality and the variety of perspectives that gives the shared world its "reality", Arendt implicitly recognises the importance of developing self-understandings that support us to be together in ways that express power.

Even if it is agreed that the possibility of collectively actualized power pre-supposes the existence of individuals who have resisted normalization and have developed the capacity to be together with others in ways that humanize the world, the achievement of collective action is always more than the many individuals who have

made their contribution. In Heideggerian terms, Dasein's being is always being-with and in this sense we can only develop individual self-understandings through our involvement with and understanding of others. It is in this sense that just as collective action presupposes the existence of individuals, the individual presupposes the collective.

### **ARGUMENT FOR IRREDUCIBILITY**

Now that I have demonstrated the ways in which Arendt's and Foucault's accounts of power mutually imply each other, my next task is to explain why, despite a shared view of human being as being-in-the-world, Foucault's and Arendt's accounts of power are not reducible. The role of the private/public distinction for Arendt's account of power and the way in which Foucault's account of power and its constitution of subjectivity blurs this distinction will be central to my discussion. Arendt defines the realm of private using terms such as family, household, individual maintenance of life, force and necessity, inequality and biology (Arendt, 1998: 28-31). While Arendt discusses the private realm in terms of a deprivation of visibility or appearance, she emphasizes that a private as well as a public life is essential for human well-being: there are aspects of human life that should be hidden and those that require full publicity (Arendt, 1998: 68-73).



In contrast, the public realm denotes appearance, reality and the common world (Arendt, 1998: 50-52). The reality of the public realm depends on human plurality and the contribution of many individual and unique perspectives (Arendt, 1998: 57). The distinction between the private and the public is characterized by a distinction between subjectivity and objectivity: the subjectivity of an individual perspective cannot reveal the objective commonality of a world whose reality depends upon the perspective of the many (Arendt, 1998: 58). Arendt maintains this distinction within her account of power and theorizes a distinct and authentic political space where a form of political identity is revealed.

Holding to the importance of this distinction in the context of explaining the character and workings of power does come at a cost. As Villa (1992: 715) emphasizes, in articulating power in terms of its positive and communicative character, the negative or repressive aspects of power are relegated to non-public domains and branded as violence, force or strength. Villa argues that both the liberal notion of power as negative, and the notion of power as positive and productive, emerge from the idea that it is possible to control or to use power without being controlled or used by it (Villa, 1992: 715). It is this idea that Foucault argues against with his critique of the ways in which power constitutes subjectivity (Villa, 1992: 715). In doing so, Foucault blurs the distinction between private and public in the context of the ways in which power constitutes subjectivity within private, social and public spaces.

From a Foucauldian perspective, relations of power simultaneously constrain and enable human possibility to constitute a complex interplay between power, freedom and subjectivity. The space that is constituted through this interplay is unbounded by any distinction or separation between the social, personal and ethical domains of human existence, but as a space of the “potentially public” it is characterized by plurality in the sense that it rests upon recognition of the viewpoints of the many (Dolan, 2005: 377). Foucault’s recognition of the way in which technologies of power normalize human beings reveal the ways in which opportunities for political action are augmented through acts of questioning and resistance (Dolan, 2005: 373). This implies that the blurring of the distinction between what was formerly private and public through the proliferation of disciplinary techniques of power in more modern times has not only allowed power relations to permeate every detail of our lives, but has also illuminated the dangers of leading an unquestioning form of life.

Underlining the irreducibility of Arendtian and Foucauldian accounts of power is Foucault’s understanding of what grounds human equality. As I argued earlier in my thesis, in articulating the opportunities for human beings to contest the powerful techniques inherent to modern social-political space, Foucault recognizes a kind of equality that emerges from the shared experience of being “members of the governed (Foucault, 2002: 474-475). Shared suffering can underpin individual acts of contestation and resistance and the example of Cabramatta is a case in point. By questioning and resisting the constrained subjectivities forced upon them through relations of power in the

social-political sphere, members of the community, as members of the governed, gave a public face to their private, yet shared suffering. As Foucault recognizes common suffering can attain a public face through texts and discourses, providing a shared foundation for “a moral awakening”, in the sense that we can collectively overcome oppression (Foucault, 2002: 468).

Within the social-political spaces of governmentality we are constrained by techniques of power, yet we are also enabled by the power that constitutes us as members of the governed. This kind of social equality embodies recognition that our shared experiences in the world provide the grounds for a right to speak out (Foucault, 2002: 474-475), yet it is far from the kind of equality of uniqueness that informs Arendt’s theorization of the political which relies on a strict distinction between the private and public. Characterized by a strict distinction between private and public, “the political” is not considered by Arendt to be a formally organized politics (a space which in the end may not be political in Arendt’s sense at all), but encompasses many spaces of collective action characterized by human solidarity. Arendt recognizes that human beings act politically when they critically engage with the world, defining a critical attitude in specifically worldly terms as one that it is always directed outward towards the world rather than inward towards the self. (Arendt, 1995: 4-5).

In recognition of Arendt’s insights on the power of collective action, a wider theoretical model of power must appreciate the importance of enduring identities we can create for ourselves through cooperation with others in the world. Indeed, Foucault’s later

writing suggests that he was not closed to the possibilities offered by collective politics (Allen, 2001: 145) and he was in favor promoting the possibility of non-dominative consensual power relations as a “critical principle” (Foucault, 1991a: 379). This is important. However, in alignment with Foucault’s insights concerning the role of power in the constitution of subjectivity, there must remain a focus on the capacity of individuals to question the necessity of social practices and to recognize the possibilities for resistance and contestation.

For Foucault power relations are “games of strategy” through which individual and groups aim to control and manage the actions of others and it is through caring for the self that an individual can involve themselves in these games without resorting to practices of domination (Foucault, 2003a: 40). As Foucault recognizes, “political collectives” are comprised of individuals who are shaped by power and who are necessarily free, that is they have possibilities for action (Foucault, 2003a: 41). As Dolan (2005: 377) has emphasized, Foucault’s recognition of the relationship between the private/public and the social/political reveals the opportunities inherent to a space of human inter-subjectivity which is always “potentially public”. Foucault has demonstrated this via a detailed theorization of the constitutive role of power relations in the social realm, the complexity of the relationship between freedom and power and the importance of practices of self-government for managing our relationship to others.

In contrast, the connection between the social and the political is not fully addressed by Arendt in her efforts to draw a line around what is authentically political

(Pitkin, 1981). Arendt's emphasis on the dangers of a social realm organized around biological commonality and necessity and her concern with the preservation of a worldly space to house human achievements and disclose our individual uniqueness requires recognition of the distinction between private and public, social and political. As I argued in Chapter Eight, for Arendt, action is the one human activity that allows every unique individual to make a new beginning with others in power and to actualize their freedom. From an Arendtian perspective, the distinction between the social and public spheres of human life operates to protect and preserve one of our most meaningful human experiences-our relationship to others through action in the shared world. This matters because, as I outlined in my earlier discussion, human relationships characterized by plurality and openness ensure the humanness of the world.

Despite the efforts of many of Arendt's readers to provide an account of the relationship between the social and the political (Pitkin, 1981) or to defend her account of politics from charges of elitism and a failure to recognize the possibilities inherent to the social and private spheres (Canovan, 1995; Tsao, 2002; Taminiaux, 2000), Arendt does not fully account for the constitutive effects of powerful social relations, nor their ethical and moral implications for our everyday lives. The importance of a gulf between what is private/social and what is public/political within Arendt's theory of power causes difficulties for an Arendtian inspired account of how political forms of identity are partly achieved through a relationship of oneself to oneself.

Arendt's adoption of the public/private distinction informs her account of power in ways that make it incompatible with Foucault's. From a Foucauldian perspective, we can never understand who we are, nor fulfill our responsibility to find meaning in our existence without recognizing the constitutive effects of disciplinary power/biopower in the social realm. This social realm is a political realm because it is the space where the relationship between power and freedom plays out. Our response to the ways that power has constituted our subjectivity in the social realm provides the possibility of collective action as a "critical principle" (Foucault, 1991a: 379). For Arendt, on the other hand, we can never understand or reveal who we are without co-creating an authentic political space with others. Human solidarity is not a form of togetherness of members of the governed, but is broader and characterized by the togetherness of a plurality of individuals who create a more humane world through their collective actions.

Arendt and Foucault are influenced by the Heideggerian notion of being-in-the-world: their accounts of power pre-suppose each other in some important ways and they ultimately shed light on two different dimensions of the relationship between human beings and their world. However, their divergent understandings of how and where power is actualized means that are not reducible to each other. My unified framework of power mirrors the concerns raised by Allen in her recognition that neither Foucault's nor Arendt's accounts are sufficient on their own to fill out a broader picture of power in all its complexity (Allen, 2001: 143). From the perspective of my own concerns, neither account can provide an adequately detailed explanation of all the ways in which power

mediates our lived experience. As Allen has argued, a purely Foucauldian perspective of power cannot provide an account of the power of human solidarity, while Arendt cannot adequately address the implications of dangerous power relations implicated in the strategies and techniques inherent to the social realm of everyday life (Allen, 2001: 143).

A wider theoretical framework of power must recognize the possibility that the power experienced in solidarity with others is supported by our capacity to resist, contest and overcome relations of power in the social realm. While this is a space where we sometimes live as isolated world-less subjects, it is also a potentially political space within which we live a large proportion of our lives. It is also important to recognize that without ethical work done at the individual level there may few individuals who develop the capacity to be open towards others and to engage in forms of friendship that ensure the humanness of the world.

These tensions between “the how” and “the where” of power do not necessarily undermine the coherence of a wider theoretical model of power based on Foucault’s and Arendt’s insights. Allen (2001: 145), for example, suggests that a wider framework could embody the notion of power as constitutive of agency and subjectivity in two “complementary senses”: on the one hand through strategic power relations and our resistance to them, and, on the other, through the experience of acting with others<sup>56</sup>. A

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<sup>56</sup> It is important to note that Allen argues that Arendtian power relations form agents and subjects in ways that are communicative and normatively positive (Allen, 2001: 145). While I raised concerns with the

more unified framework of power must recognize the moral implications associated with powers role in the constitution of subjectivity, in the sense that the power we experience in everyday life has important implications for the way in which we act collectively with others to overcome oppression and to create a space for our shared projects.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In my discussion I demonstrated the ways in which Foucault's and Arendt's key insights on power presuppose each other and in doing so form part of a wider conceptual framework. While I described the ways in which their shared conception of human existence as being-in-the-world animated their accounts of power, I argued that both Arendt and Foucault adopted different perspectives on the relationship between power and lived experience. Foucault has emphasized that it is possible to understand how our constitution as subjects through the disciplinary techniques and social practices does not absolve us from taking responsibility for how we live in the world. We are conditioned subjects who are also free subjects; we are free to question and contest the necessity of

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notion of Arendtian power as normatively positive in Chapter Three, this does not undermine the point Allen makes about the different ways in which power constitutes subjectivity and agency and how a wider framework of power could incorporate two senses of power's constitutive role.



our experience, to practice our freedom in the world in ways that are mutually respectful towards our own lives and towards the lives of others, and in doing so to shape the world that has shaped us.

Foucault's account is important for understanding the role played by the individual in their relationship to the world. Foucault's emphasis on the role that power plays in the constitution of self-understandings and how social relations have shaped opportunities for the exercise of our agency is crucial for understanding the constraints and possibilities inherent to lived experience. Foucault emphasizes the promise of our individual capacity to question the necessity of our experiences and to actively constitute ourselves in ways that create new opportunities for engaging with the world.

In contrast, Arendt has emphasized the importance of the web of human relationships for human wellbeing. Within this web we can act together to create an enduring world that will welcome our new beginnings and memorialize our unique life stories. Arendt reminds us of our responsibility to act together to preserve it, arguing that:

The life-span of man running towards death would inevitably carry everything human to ruin and destruction if it were not for the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something new, a faculty which is inherent in action, like an ever-present reminder than men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin. (Arendt, 1998: 246)

Arendt takes up the question of how human beings can collectively constitute a world that will provide a guarantee of human well-being now and in the future. Arendt's emphasis on the importance of an authentic political realm, the promise of collectively achieved political identities and the role of solidarity for human wellbeing, reveals the centrality of a world of humanness for and individuals well-being. These perspectives on power are equally important for revealing the complexity of our lived experience and as such, they both play an important role within a wider framework of power.

While I have sketched out the beginnings of a unified framework of power based on the insights offered by Foucault and Arendt, there are some promising lines of enquiry for future research. One such possibility would be to engage in a more sustained and detailed analysis of the ways in which collective action is enabled by individual acts of self-government. Another would be to further the highly promising project of a dual analysis of Arendtian and Foucauldian freedom as evidenced in the work of writers such as Grumley (2006). There are many insights offered by the writing of Arendt and Foucault and there is little doubt that the future holds many possibilities for further detailed analyses and comparisons of their work.

## **Conclusion**

My thesis was about power and the role it plays in shaping the relationship between individuals and the world. My aim was to achieve a more detailed understanding of the ways that power mediates lived experience: how the power exercised over us constrains and enables us, how our relationships with others limit and empower us and how our interactions with the world shape our self-understandings. A set of assumptions about the character of human life informed my analysis and my arguments were framed by a Heideggerian understanding of human existence as being-in-the-world. The perspectives of power offered by Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt allowed me to deviate from traditional understandings of power which imply a correlation between power and the notions of force or violence, in order to examine power from the perspective of its complex relationship with freedom.

I critically engaged with the work of Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt, examining their distinct accounts of power via conceptual and practical analyses. This allowed me to draw out the importance of their insights on power, identify the limitations of their accounts and demonstrate the practical implications of their arguments. As I emphasized in the introduction to my thesis, a number of writers have contributed to the project of a dual analysis of Foucault's and Arendt's accounts of power and my reflections of power have been deeply influenced by the work of such scholars as Dana

Villa, Amy Allen, Neve Gordon and Frederick Dolan in particular. My own contribution to this worthwhile and on-going project was to apply the insights of Foucault and Arendt within a practical context and in doing so, to further demonstrate the benefits of understanding their distinct perspectives on power as part of a larger theoretical whole.

Beginning with a Foucauldian perspective on power I emphasized the complexity of the ways in which human relationships, social practices and institutional arrangements subject us to relations of power at the level of everyday life. Through Foucault's insights on the relationship between power and freedom I was able to explore the many ways that power relations inform and mediate human lived experience. In attempting to present a more comprehensive account of power, I turned to the writing of Hannah Arendt whose emphasis on the possibilities of human togetherness and collective action illuminated an aspect of our human experience of power that was not satisfactorily addressed by Foucault's account.

Now that I have come to the end of my thesis, it is important to review what I have learned. First and foremost, it is apparent that as a conditioned human being with particular social roles and responsibilities, I can never stand outside power and completely shape my own destiny. Foucault's in-depth analysis of disciplinary/biopower demonstrated to me that I am always caught up within social relations that shape and limit my possibilities while also producing them. Foucault's work has also emphasized the importance of my capacity to engage with my limits: I am capable and in this sense

responsible, for taking up my relationship to truth, knowledge and power to create an ethos that is beautiful.

While there is a great deal I can do as an individual and as a “member of the governed”, there is much that requires the assistance of others. The power of solidarity can constitute spaces of equality, where I can appear to others as a unique individual. This collective aspect of how I experience power is highly significant. I can act with others to actualize a power that is fragile yet durable and that can be embodied within institutions that can support human well-being long past my own mortal life span. This idea of leaving something behind and making a contribution to a future shared world is connected with a sense of meaning and I find it comforting. However, this is an achievement that requires a concerted effort to perceive the world in all its objectivity (via the plurality of subjective viewpoints) and to recognize what it means to be a being-in-the-world with others. While it is sometimes all too easy to ignore the subjective viewpoints of others in favor of our own, the world can only present itself in its full objective reality when the people who create it embrace diversity. It is within a space of shared meaning co-created through the power of collective action that the “beautiful ethos” of every individual can fully appear.

The first part of my thesis was devoted to an analysis of Foucault’s account of power. Situating Foucault’s account of power within a philosophical tradition influenced by the work of such thinkers as Heidegger and Nietzsche in Chapter One, allowed me to highlight a set of shared concerns about the character of human life and the mutually

constitutive relationship between individuals and the world. This prompted a deeper understanding of Foucault's insights on power and its significance for human lived experience.

My conceptual analyses of Foucauldian power in Chapters Two, Three and Four provided a detailed exposition of the key concepts underpinning Foucault's perspective power. Foucault's arguments concerning the productive nature of power, the connection between power and knowledge and the role of power in the constitution of subjectivity were critically examined. Foucault's analyses of disciplinary power and biopower demonstrated the dangers of the connection between power and knowledge in the context of how power is constitutive of subjectivity. However, Foucault's account of subjectivity showed how the relationship between power and freedom reveals the possibilities available for individuals to resist relations of power. My conceptual analysis of Foucault's insights on power demonstrated how resistance to power relations can be meaningful within a world where there is no escape from power. It helped me to understand that although my life is shaped by my historical and social circumstances, I have the capacity to change my self-understandings: I can relate to myself in a different way through questioning the necessity of my circumstances. I understand that as a human being who is necessarily free in the ontological sense, I inhabit a space of possibility within which I can express my freedom.

Section Two provided me with an opportunity to apply Foucault's insights within a practical context. In Chapter Five, I presented an in-depth background discussion of the events and issues that were experienced in Cabramatta in the 1990's and beyond. This discussion provided the framework for my Foucauldian analysis of relations of power in Cabramatta that was the subject matter of Chapter Six. In this Chapter I demonstrated the benefits of a Foucauldian understanding of power for revealing the ways in which powerful discourses and social practices embody relations of power that operate to shape human subjectivity in both constraining and enabling ways. I argued that the negative discourses that associated crime and race in Cabramatta shaped the possibilities for subjectivity in constraining ways. Foucault's account of how powerful social relations work to shape our self-understandings allowed me to draw out the implications of powerful discourses in Cabramatta for the lives of the individuals in the community. At the same time, Foucault's understanding of the complex relationship between power and freedom revealed the possibilities for resistance and explained how members of the community exercised freedom in practical terms.

While a Foucauldian perspective on power in Cabramatta revealed many aspects of the relationship between power and lived experience, there was still a less than complete picture of the ways in which power shaped the lives of the community. In Chapter Seven, I outlined the limitations of a purely Foucauldian approach to explaining power. These limitations were associated with the absence of an explicit normative framework within which moral distinctions between different kinds of power could be

meaningfully made. Problems with the centrality of Foucault's focus on the self were discussed in the context of the opportunities of collective forms of action largely ignored by a purely Foucauldian approach. Ultimately, I argued that a purely Foucauldian framework could not make moral distinctions between different kinds of power due to a lack of theorization of what constitutes human wellbeing. This was demonstrated through the Cabramatta case study in light of harmful forms of resistance that revealed the dangers of particular kinds of contestation for human lived experience. I also argued that a more detailed picture of power in Cabramatta required recognition of the power of collective action: an aspect of power that Foucault does not explicitly theorize.

Section Three allowed me to introduce Hannah Arendt as a philosopher whose unique perspective on power could critically address some of the gaps in Foucault's account. In Chapter Eight I examined the key insights that informed Arendt's account of power including her analysis of the human activities of labor, work and action, her central notions of natality and plurality, her adoption of the public/private distinction and her highly particular understanding of "the world". In Chapter Nine, I presented an extensive characterization of Arendtian power, defining and explaining how Arendt articulates power and its relationship with "the political". Her concern with the elevation of social concerns to the public realm of politics, her central distinction between power and violence, her account of power as expressed through human togetherness and solidarity and the normative dimensions of her account of power were analyzed and discussed.



Chapter Ten provided the opportunity to explain the ways in which collective action empowered the Cabramatta community. Through my Arendtian analysis of power in Cabramatta I emphasized that exclusion from the public realm of power forces a form of worldlessness upon individuals that has negative effect on self-understandings and moral implications for the world we share as human beings. Arendt's contribution to understanding how power operated in Cabramatta was significant. Left unaccounted for by my Foucauldian analysis of Cabramatta was the implications of collective power for the Cabramatta community. As I discussed earlier in my thesis, exclusion from public space can undermine the connection between the individual and the realm of human affairs leading to worldlessness. According to Arendt, the power of collective action supports human well-being because it is constitutive of a worldly home.

My Arendtian analysis of power in Cabramatta articulated the Inquiry into Policing in Cabramatta as a political space of collective power. Its recognition of the effects of Cabramatta's drug and crime problems for the community created a space for the possibilities of collective political action. Those who had lost their connection to the world through their loss of a fully functioning public space had the possibility of re-establishing this connection. The meaningfulness of the experience of solidarity and the possibilities of collectively realised power is what Arendt's insights on power have illuminated in a highly original way. As a being-in-the-world with others, my life is shaped by my relationships with other individuals. What I have learned from my Arendtian analysis is that there are some aspects of my experience (and of what makes

my life meaningful) that are only fully possible within a co-created space of cooperative solidarity.

The conceptual and practical analyses of power provided in Sections One, Two and Three, provided the background upon which my arguments for a more unified framework of power were based. In Chapter Eleven I articulated Foucault's and Arendt's accounts of power as two dimensions of a larger theoretical whole. I argued for a more unified framework of power that encompassed the complex character of power, its effects on human life and the intricacy of its relationship with human freedom. I emphasized that our experience of power is mediated by the different realms in which we live our lives, by the character of our relationships with others and in the context of the activities we are engaging in and what we are aiming to achieve. Power is constitutive of my subjective experiences in the world through the ways that I exert power over others and the way they exercise power over me, via the social roles I take up and through my deliberate decisions to act with others and partake in the power of collective action.

My proposed framework of power was supported through an examination of the ways in which Foucault's and Arendt's accounts of power mutually imply each other. In my discussion I argued that Foucault's account of power presupposed Arendt's insights on the importance of a humanly constituted "world" for human well-being. Despite Foucault's concern with individual acts of questioning and contestation, I argued that Foucault's account of resistance and his understanding of the intricate relationship between power and freedom were informed by the assumption that the shared world

provides meaning to our efforts to question, resist and practice our freedom. I also argued that Arendtian power depended upon the capacity for each individual to resist Foucauldian power relations in the social realm. In other words, the possibilities of collective action depend upon the existence of subjects with a capacity for self-government.

In my introduction I relayed a story about a picture of an elderly man in my grandfather's shed when I was a little girl. I stated that the sentiment "Stop the world, I want to get off" represented the everyday struggle of human life in navigating the challenging path between power and freedom and argued that this raised a question about the relationship between power and lived experience. I recognize that question of how power mediates our experiences as beings-in-the-world does not have a definitive answer. However, we can gain a deeper understanding of this relationship if we recognize and engage with the limits placed upon us as individuals constituted through relations of power, while remaining open to the empowering possibilities of collective action and human solidarity. In offering my conceptual and practical analyses of Foucauldian and Arendtian power, and in taking up the challenge of articulating Foucault's and Arendt's accounts of power as two dimensions of a more unified framework, I have accomplished something important. I have contributed to the project of painting a more complete picture of the ways that human beings experience the relationship between power and freedom.

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